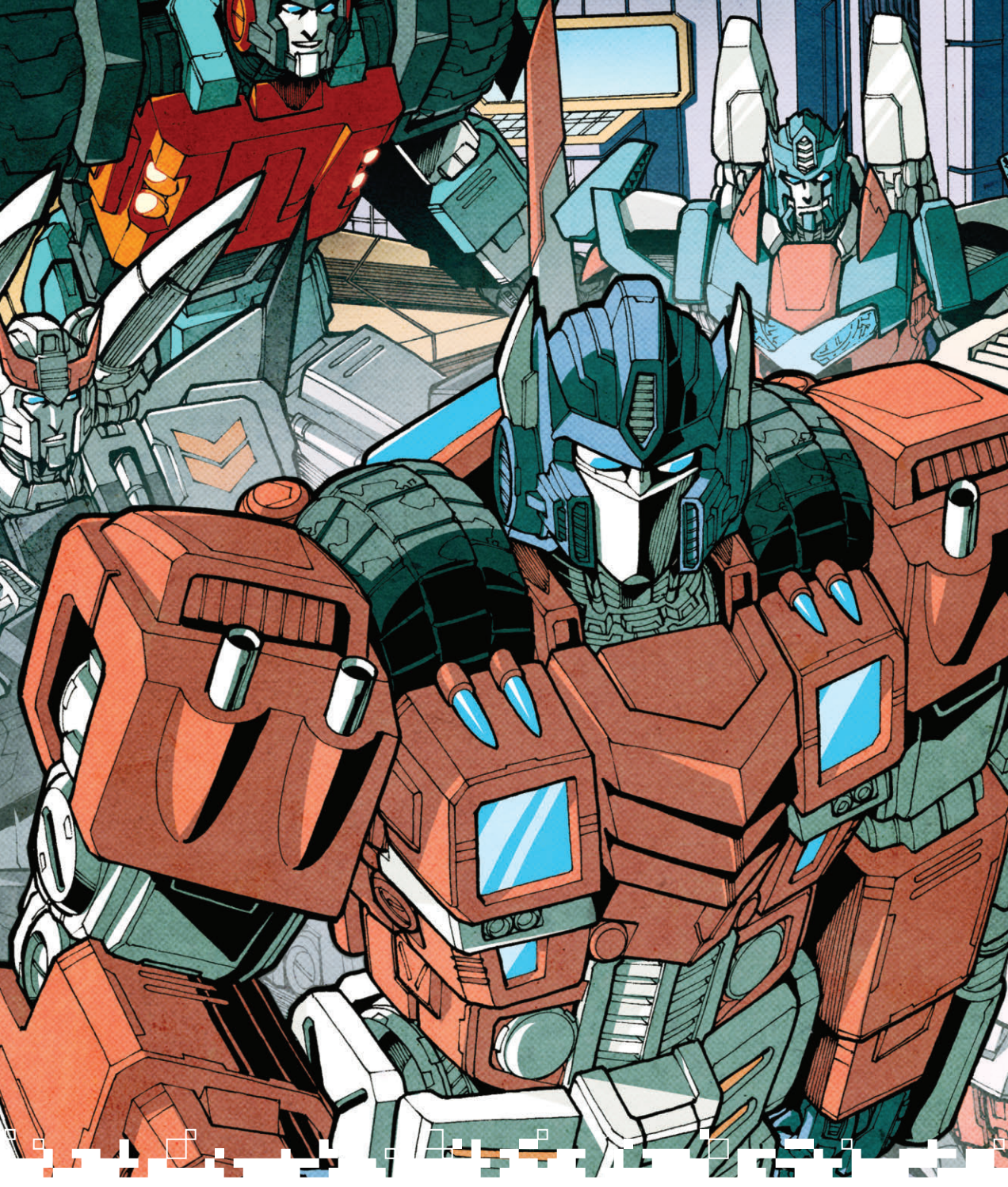
THE TRANSFORMERS
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE
VOLUME 3



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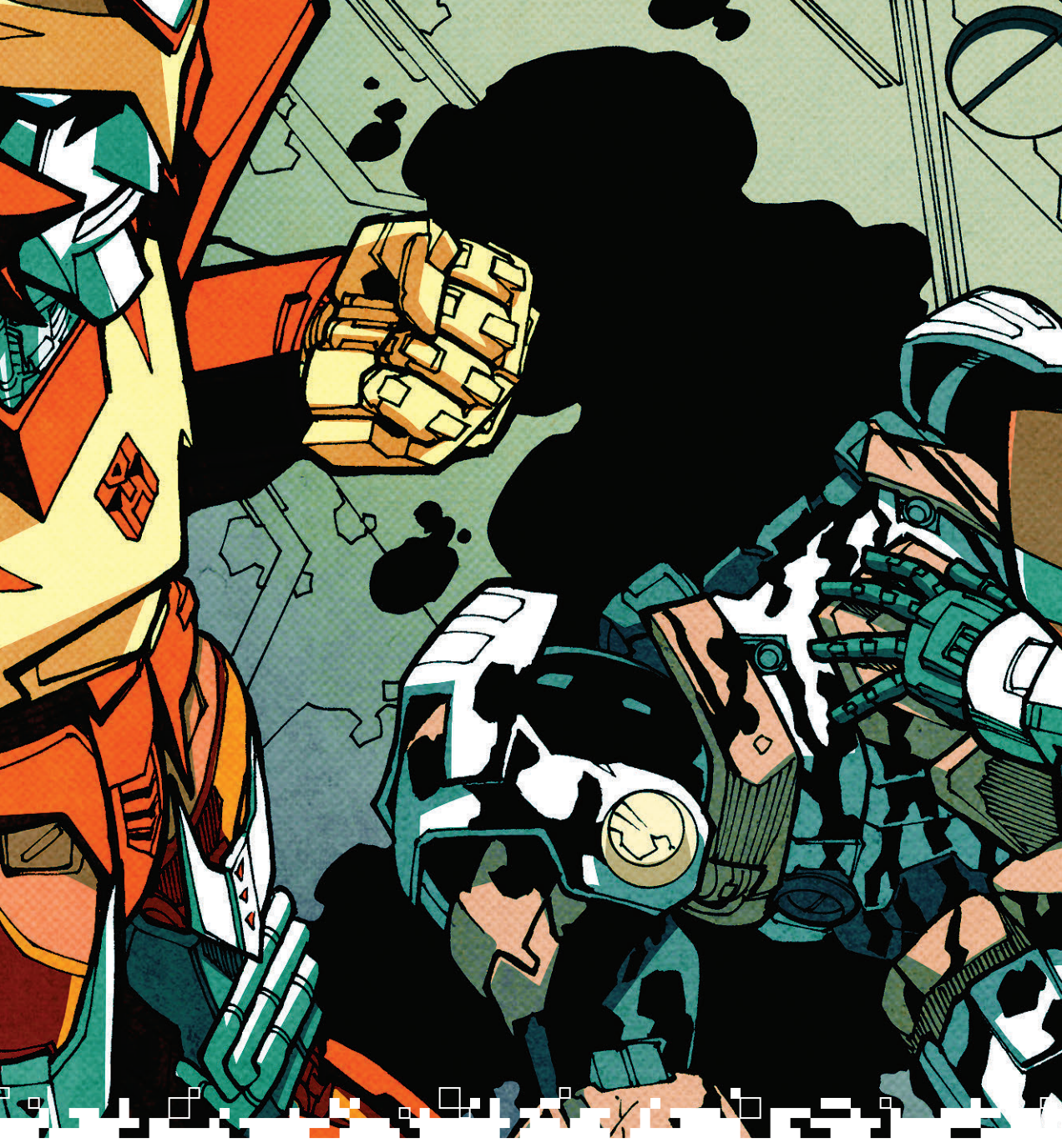

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Series Edits by John Barber
Collection Edits by Justin Eisinger and Alonzo Simon
Collection Design by Chris Mowry

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MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE
VOLUME 3

☐ PRIMUS

WRITTEN BY **JAMES ROBERTS**
ART BY **JIMBO SALGADO** AND **EMIL CABALTIERRA**
FLASHBACK ART BY **GUIDO GUIDI**
COLORS BY **JUAN FERNANDEZ** WITH **JOANA LAFUENTE**
LETTERS BY **CHRIS MOWRY**

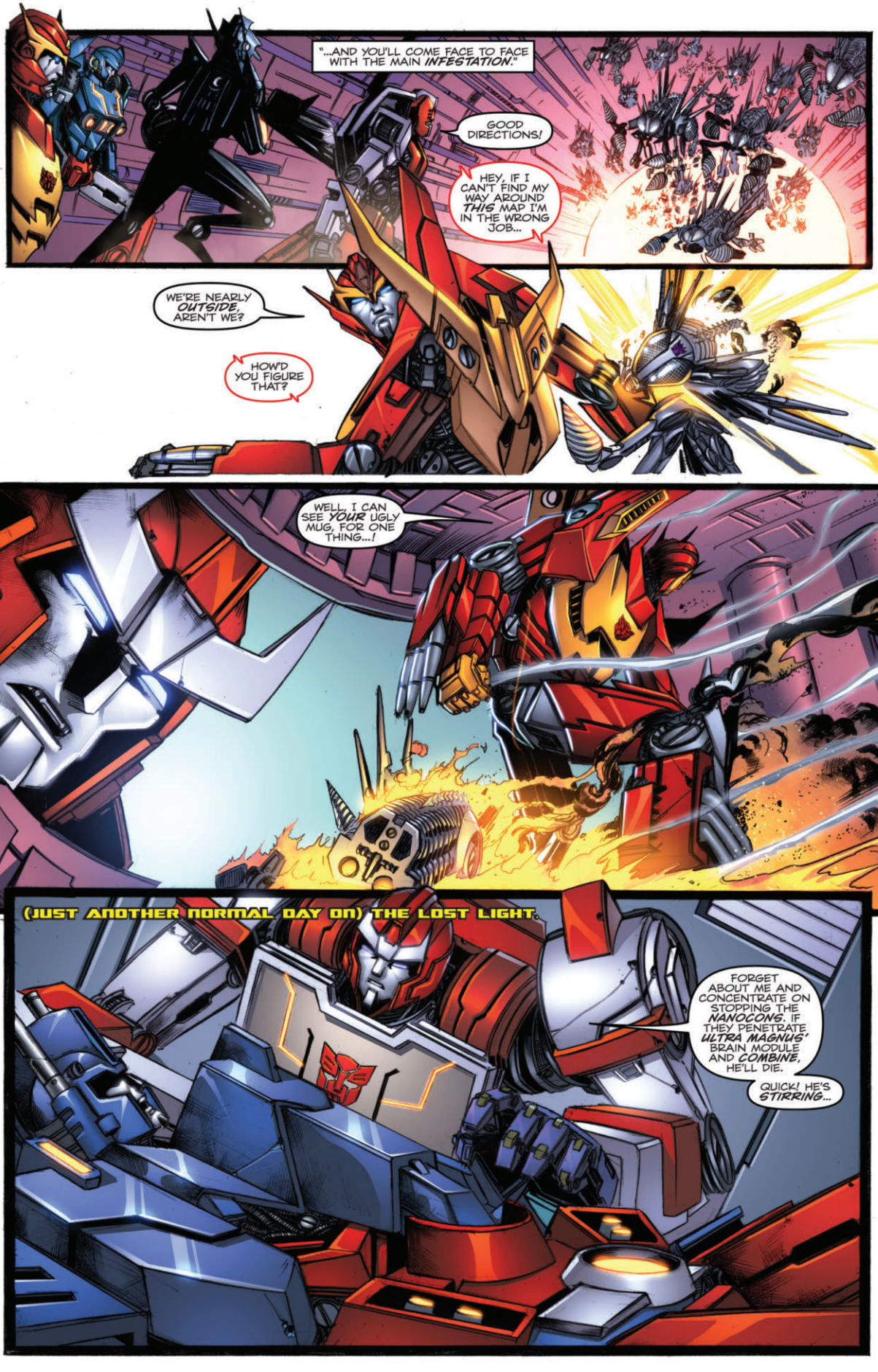
☐ SHADOWPLAY

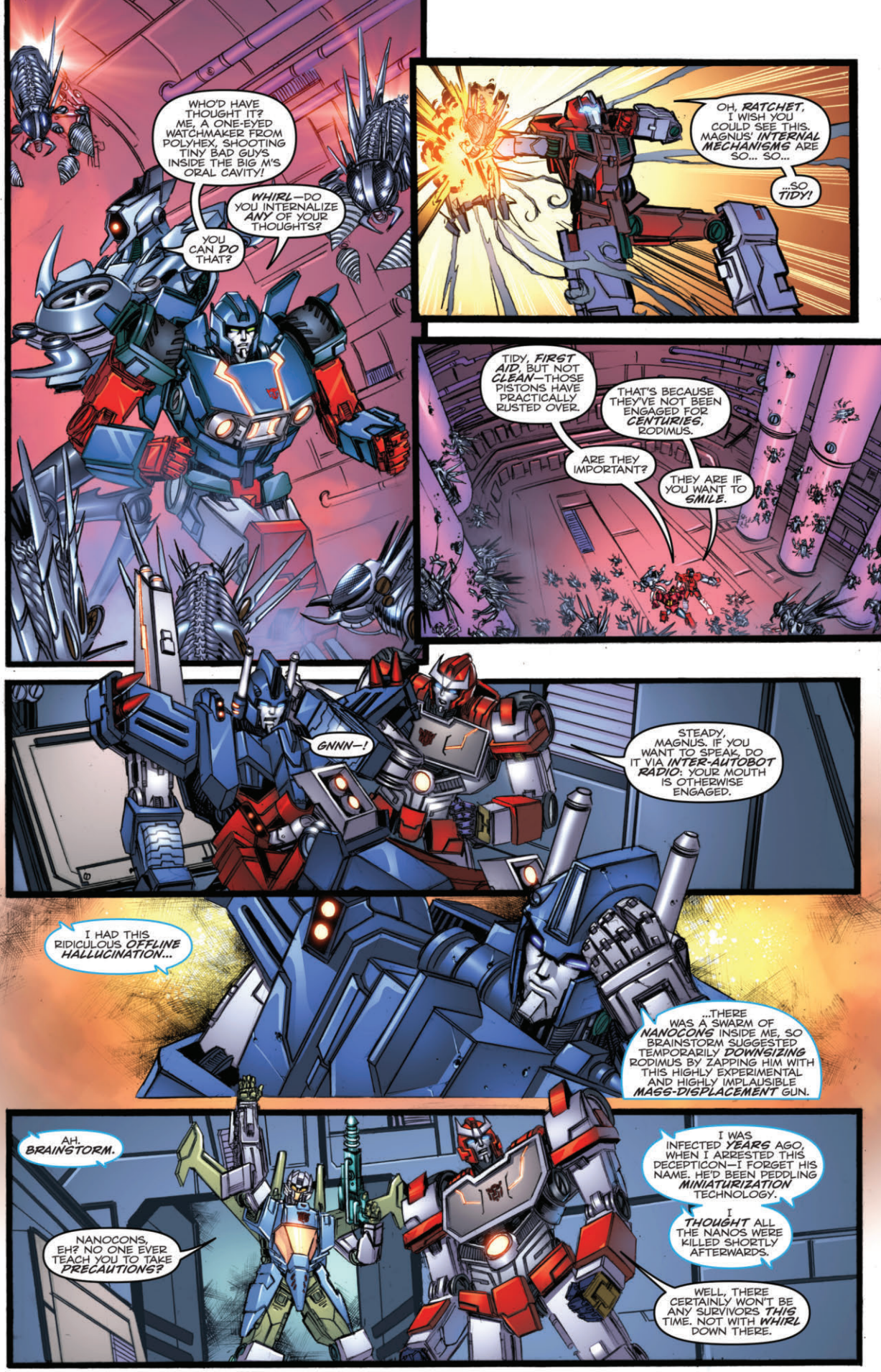
WRITTEN BY **JAMES ROBERTS** ART BY **ALEX MILNE**
ADDITIONAL INKS BY **JUAN CASTRO** AND **JOHN WYCOUGH**
COLORS BY **JOSH BURCHAM** LETTERS BY **CHRIS MOWRY** AND **SHAWN LEE**

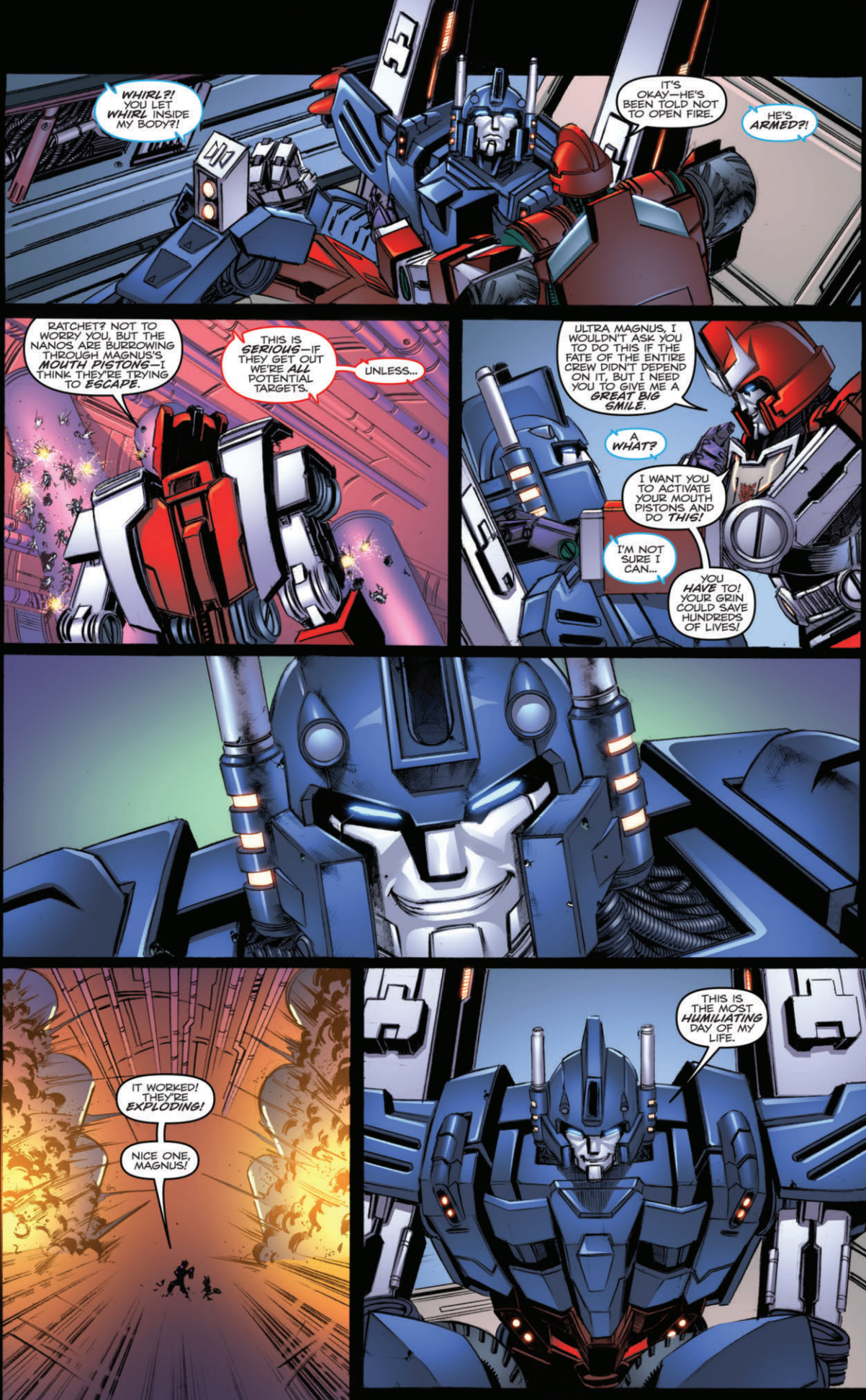
□ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE ANNUAL COVER A

by **TIM SEELEY** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**

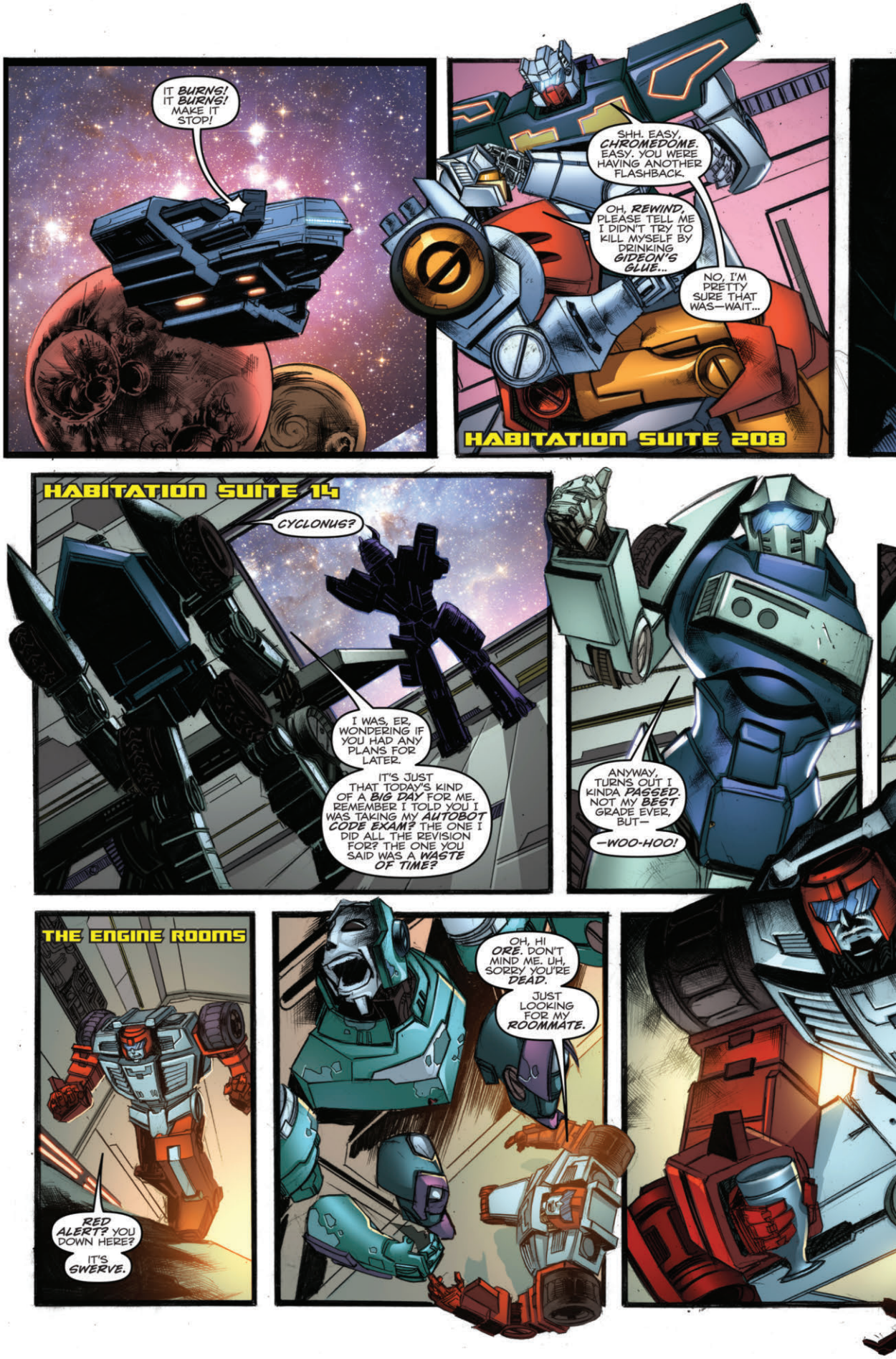
PRIMUS
YOU, ME, AND OTHER REVELATIONS
HOW AM I DOING?
THAT'S THE FOURTH TIME YOU'VE ASKED ME THAT, RODIMUS.
WHAT CAN I SAY? BENEATH MY COCKSURE EXTERIOR I HAVE TERRIBLY LOW SELF-ESTEEM.
YES, BUT BENEATH THAT LOW SELF-ESTEEM YOU REALLY DO THINK YOU'RE BETTER THAN EVERYONE ELSE.
FAIR POINT.
1: SIGNS & PORTENTS
"THE GREATEST GIFT THAT PRIMUS BESTOWED UPON HIS CHILDREN WAS THE CAPACITY FOR THEM TO QUESTION HIS EXISTENCE. FOR ONLY WHEN DISBELIEF IS AN OPTION DOES FAITH COME INTO ITS OWN."
ALPHA TRION SPEAKING AT THE NOVA PRIME MEMORIAL LECTURES, 5TH CYCLE 522
KII-YAH!
B-KOOM
GET OUT THE WAY, SKIDS! I CAN'T GET A CLEAR SHOT!
RODIMUS SAID "NO GUNS"! WHAT PART OF "NO GUNS" DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
THE GUN PART...?
TYPICAL WRECKER! IT'S ALL BANG-BANG-RELOAD-BANG!
CLOSE QUARTERS COMBAT IS A FINE ART. OBSERVE...
AH YES, THE ANCIENT AND MYSTICAL ART OF DRIVING INTO THINGS.
I CAN'T SEE WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE, BUT ALL I CAN HEAR IS MACHO BANTER. YOU'VE GOT TO SHUT UP AND KEEP MOVING!
ABOVE THE INTERSECTION ON YOUR LEFT YOU'LL FIND A SHAFT. CLIMB UP IT...


"...AND YOU'LL COME FACE TO FACE WITH THE MAIN *INFESTATION*."
GOOD DIRECTIONS!
HEY, IF I CAN'T FIND MY WAY AROUND *THIS* MAP I'M IN THE WRONG JOB...
WE'RE NEARLY *OUTSIDE*, AREN'T WE?
HOW'D YOU FIGURE THAT?
WELL, I CAN SEE *YOUR* UGLY MUG, FOR ONE THING...!
(JUST ANOTHER NORMAL DAY ON) THE LOST LIGHT.
FORGET ABOUT ME AND CONCENTRATE ON STOPPING THE *NANOCONS*. IF THEY PENETRATE *ULTRA MAGNUS'* BRAIN MODULE AND *COMBINE*, HE'LL DIE.
QUICK! HE'S *STIRRING*...


WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT IT? ME, A ONE-EYED WATCHMAKER FROM POLYHEX, SHOOTING TINY BAD GUYS INSIDE THE BIG M'S ORAL CAVITY!
WHIRL—DO YOU INTERNALIZE ANY OF YOUR THOUGHTS?
YOU CAN DO THAT?
OH, RATCHET, I WISH YOU COULD SEE THIS. MAGNUS' INTERNAL MECHANISMS ARE SO... SO...
...SO TIDY!
TIDY, FIRST AID, BUT NOT CLEAN—THOSE PISTONS HAVE PRACTICALLY RUSTED OVER.
THAT'S BECAUSE THEY'VE NOT BEEN ENGAGED FOR CENTURIES, RODIMUS.
ARE THEY IMPORTANT?
THEY ARE IF YOU WANT TO SMILE.
GNNN—!
STEADY, MAGNUS. IF YOU WANT TO SPEAK, DO IT VIA INTER-AUTOBOT RADIO; YOUR MOUTH IS OTHERWISE ENGAGED.
I HAD THIS RIDICULOUS OFFLINE HALLUCINATION...
...THERE WAS A SWARM OF NANOCONS INSIDE ME, SO BRAINSTORM SUGGESTED TEMPORARILY DOWNSIZING RODIMUS BY ZAPPING HIM WITH THIS HIGHLY EXPERIMENTAL AND HIGHLY IMPLAUSIBLE MASS-DISPLACEMENT GUN.
AH. BRAINSTORM.
NANOCONS, EH? NO ONE EVER TEACH YOU TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS?
I WAS INFECTED YEARS AGO, WHEN I ARRESTED THIS DECEPTICON—I FORGET HIS NAME. HE'D BEEN PEDDLING MINIATURIZATION TECHNOLOGY.
I THOUGHT ALL THE NANOS WERE KILLED SHORTLY AFTERWARDS.
WELL, THERE CERTAINLY WON'T BE ANY SURVIVORS THIS TIME. NOT WITH WHIRL DOWN THERE.


WHIRL?! YOU LET WHIRL INSIDE MY BODY?!
IT'S OKAY—HE'S BEEN TOLD NOT TO OPEN FIRE.
HE'S ARMED?!
RATCHET? NOT TO WORRY YOU, BUT THE NANOS ARE BURROWING THROUGH MAGNUS'S MOUTH PISTONS—I THINK THEY'RE TRYING TO ESCAPE.
THIS IS SERIOUS—IF THEY GET OUT WE'RE ALL POTENTIAL TARGETS.
UNLESS...
ULTRA MAGNUS, I WOULDN'T ASK YOU TO DO THIS IF THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE CREW DIDN'T DEPEND ON IT, BUT I NEED YOU TO GIVE ME A GREAT BIG SMILE.
A WHAT?
I WANT YOU TO ACTIVATE YOUR MOUTH PISTONS AND DO THIS!
I'M NOT SURE I CAN...
YOU HAVE TO! YOUR GRIN COULD SAVE HUNDREDS OF LIVES!
IT WORKED! THEY'RE EXPLODING!
NICE ONE, MAGNUS!
THIS IS THE MOST HUMILIATING DAY OF MY LIFE.

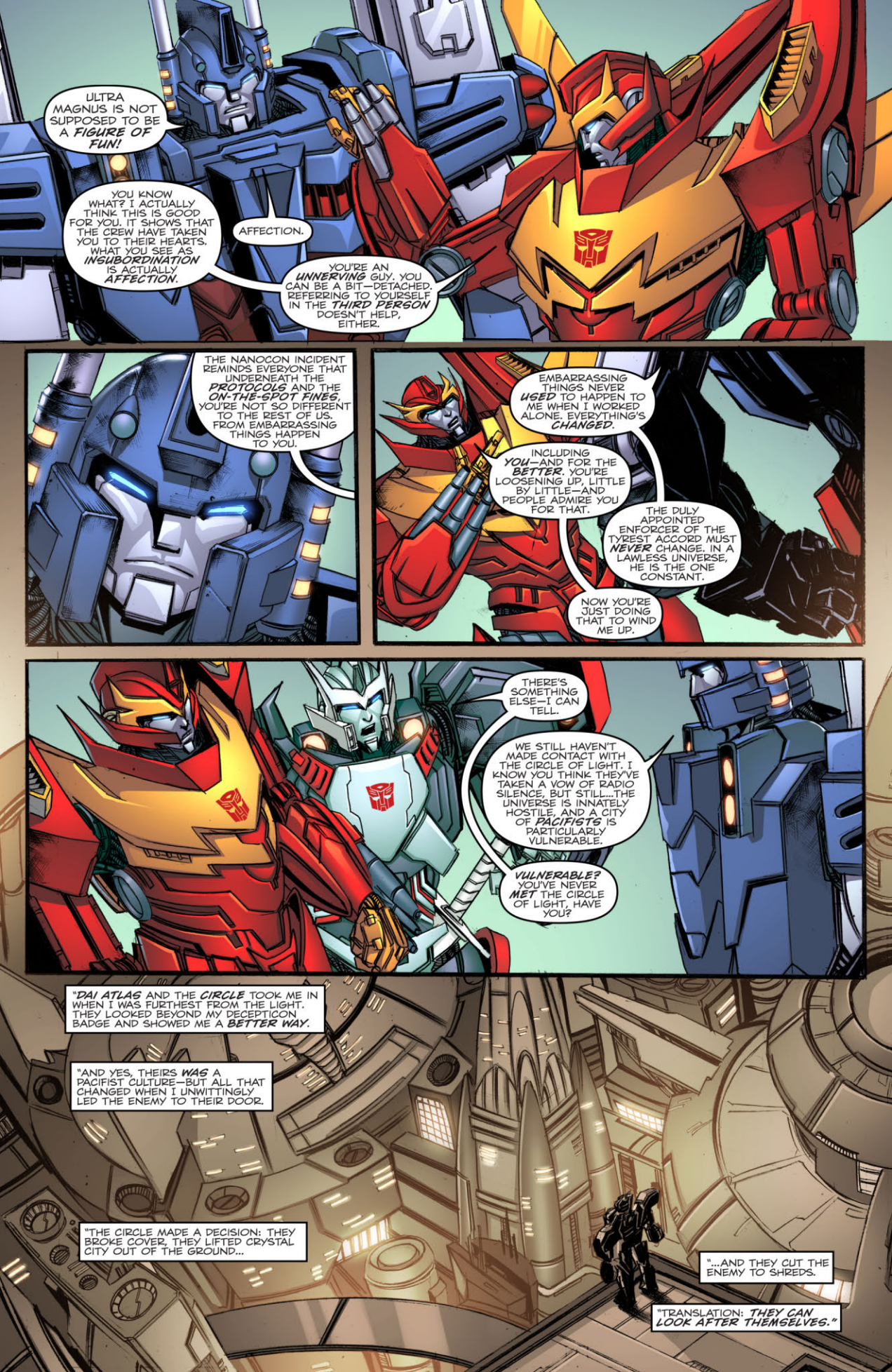
LATER.
ATOMIZER
INTERIOR DESIGNER TURNED DEADLY ASSASSIN. FASCINATED BY HIGH-VELOCITY BLADED WEAPONS. POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKER.
I'D BETTER TAKE THAT CROSSBOW, ATOMIZER.
YEAH, YEAH—WHATEVER YOU SAY, SMILER.
JACKPOT
OVERBEARING AND RECKLESS. A PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLER. OVER-RELIANCE ON GOOD LUCK PUTS EVERYONE AT RISK. POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKER.
TRAILBREAKER/TRAILCUTTER
A BRAVE AND GENTLE MEDIATOR. CHEERFUL, CONCILIATORY MANNER BOOSTS THE MORALE OF OTHERS. POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKER.
BADGE IS LOOKING A LITTLE CROOKED THERE, JACKPOT.
A BIT LIKE YOUR SMILE, EH? YOUR BILLON-TO-ONE SMILE? THE SMILE THAT COST ME 5,000 SHANIX?
DON'T LET HIM UPSET YOU, MAGNUS. TRY TO GRIN AND BEAR IT.
ULTRA MAGNUS
DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER
ULTRA MAGNUS
DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER OF THE TYREST ACCORD. LAUGHINGSTOCK.


IT BURNS! IT BURNS! MAKE IT STOP!
SHH. EASY, CHROMEDOME. EASY. YOU WERE HAVING ANOTHER FLASHBACK.
OH, REWIND, PLEASE TELL ME I DIDN'T TRY TO KILL MYSELF BY DRINKING GIDEON'S GLUE...
NO, I'M PRETTY SURE THAT WAS—WAIT...
HABITATION SUITE 208
HABITATION SUITE 14
CYCLONUS?
I WAS, ER, WONDERING IF YOU HAD ANY PLANS FOR LATER.
IT'S JUST THAT TODAY'S KIND OF A BIG DAY FOR ME. REMEMBER I TOLD YOU I WAS TAKING MY AUTOBOT CODE EXAM? THE ONE I DID ALL THE REVISION FOR? THE ONE YOU SAID WAS A WASTE OF TIME?
ANYWAY, TURNS OUT I KINDA PASSED. NOT MY BEST GRADE EVER, BUT—
—WOO-HOO!
THE ENGINE ROOMS
RED ALERT? YOU DOWN HERE?
IT'S SWERVE.
OH, HI ORE. DON'T MIND ME. UH, SORRY YOU'RE DEAD.
JUST LOOKING FOR MY ROOMMATE.

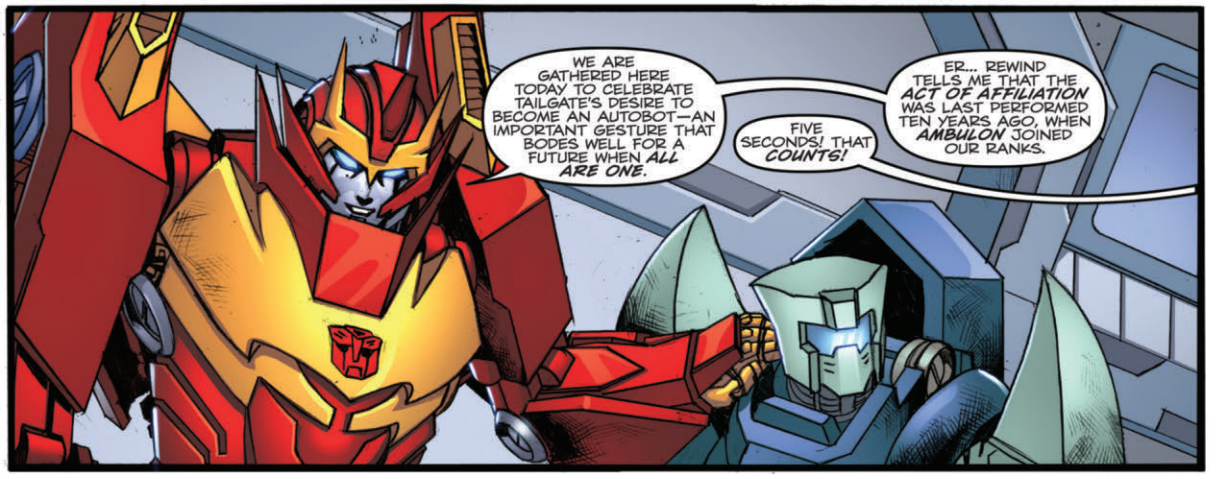
ACCESSING INTERNAL DATABASE...
FATALITIES: AUTOBOT...
CAUSES OF DEATH: SUICIDE...
MYCOPROPELENE, INGESTION OF...
MATCHES: ONE...
YEAH, THAT WAS SKYFALL. WHICH MEANS YOU WERE RELIVING AN INHERITED MEMORY. AGAIN.
I SAID AT THE TIME THAT YOU WERE DOING TOO MANY AUTOPSIES, BUT YOU NEVER LISTEN TO ME—EVER!
YOU KNOW THIS ONLY HAPPENS—THIS FALSE RECALL ONLY HAPPENS WHEN I LET MY GUARD DOWN. WHEN I'M RECHARGING AND—
—I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU PUT UP WITH ME.
YES. EXACTLY. THAT IS THE CORRECT RESPONSE.
NOW SHIFT GEARS OR WE'LL BE LATE FOR THE CEREMONY...
SO WHAT THAT MEANS IS THAT I CAN GET MY PROBATIONARY BADGE. I SAY BADGE—IT'S MORE LIKE A SYMBOL THAT RODIMUS DRAWS ON MY CHEST
LOOK, THE POINT IS I'M INVITING A FEW CLOSE FRIENDS TO THE CEREMONY—WELL, A FEW CLOSE FRIENDS AND NUT-JOB—AND I KNOW IT'S STUPID AND I KNOW YOU'LL SAY NO BUT I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT, I DUNNO...
RIGHT.
NO, NO, THAT'S FINE! SORRY FOR—
—I'VE MADE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE. SORRY. I'M JUST GONNA GO AND, ER—
—JUST GONNA GO.
MAYBE YOU'VE SEEN HIM. BIG CANNON ON HIS SHOULDER? SO PARANOID HE THINKS THE PEOPLE WATCHING HIM ARE BEING WATCHED?
TALKS ABOUT BASEMENTS WHEN HE'S OFFLINE. HE'S TOTALLY MAD...
...ALTHOUGH TO BE FAIR I DON'T THINK I EVER SAW HIM TALK TO A DEAD DUOBOT.
EM PLEH ESAELP... EM PLEH...
WHAT—?

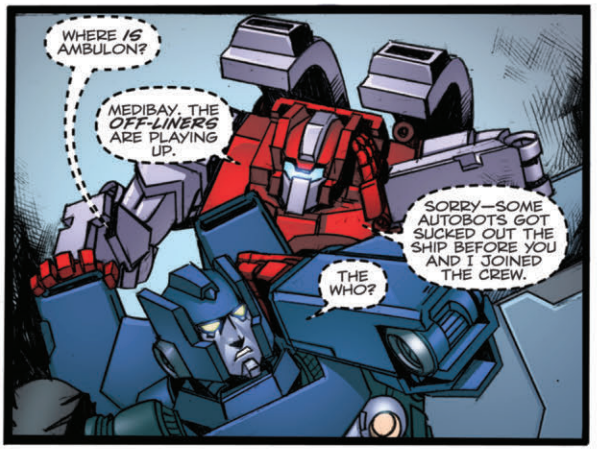
RODIMUS' QUARTERS.
CEREMONY'S IN FIVE MINUTES. I HOPE YOU'VE PREPARED YOUR SPEECH.
PREPARATION'S OVERRATED, DRIFT—ALL IT DOES IS LIMIT POTENTIAL OUTCOMES.
TRANSLATION: YOU'RE GONNA WING IT AND HOPE FOR THE BEST.
SINCE WE'RE TALKING SPEECHES... THIS "'TIL ALL ARE ONE" THING. A FEW OF US HAVE BEEN TALKING, AND—
—I MEAN WE LOVE IT AND ALL, BUT IT'S ONE OF THOSE SAYINGS THAT'S BEST USED IN MODERATION. OTHERWISE, IT SORT OF... LOSES ITS IMPACT.
WHAT? I DON'T SAY IT THAT OFTEN...
...'TIL ALL ARE ONE.
'TIL!
ALL!
ARE!
ONE!
'TIL ALL ARE ONE!
'TIL ALL ARE ONE...
'TIL
ALL
ARE
ONE!

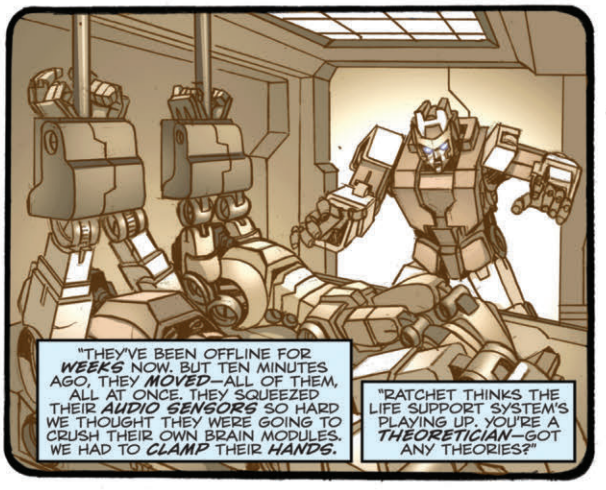
OPTIMUS USED TO SAY IT.
PARDON?
OPTIMUS USED TO SAY IT.
TRUE—ONCE EVERY DECADE OR SO, AND IN ***VERY EPIC CIRCUMSTANCES***: LIKE WHEN HE WAS BATTLING SHARDS OF LIVING RAGE, OR EXORCISING THE ***DEMONICONS***.
NOT WHEN HE BEAT HIGHBROW AT A GAME OF FULLSTASIS.
THAT WAS A HELL OF A GAME.
ANYWAY, WHAT DO YOU CARE? GO AWAY AND ***MEDITATE*** OR SOMETHING.
ALL ***YOU*** CARE ABOUT IS ***AFTER*** THE CEREMONY WHEN WE REACH ***CRYSTAL CITY*** AND YOU GET TO SEE ALL YOUR OLD FRIENDS AGAIN.
YEAH, BUT ***COME ON***—CRYSTAL CITY IS ***PROGRESS***. IT MEANS WE'RE FINALLY ***GETTING*** SOMEWHERE!
IMAGINE IF THE ***CIRCLE OF LIGHT*** JOINED US—WHAT A ***TEAM!***
THEM WITH THEIR UNRIVALLED KNOWLEDGE OF THE ***KNIGHTS*** OF ***CYBERTRON***, ACQUIRED OVER MILLIONS OF YEARS OF INTENSE ***CONTEMPLATION***, ROBUST ***PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY***, AND RIGOROUS ***INTELLECTUAL DEBATE***, AND US WITH OUR... WITH OUR...
WITH OUR ***BIG MAP***.
AND US WITH OUR BIG MAP! TOGETHER WE'D FIND ***CYBERUTOPIA*** BEFORE YOU COULD SAY—
WE NEED A NEW CREW.
I'M SERIOUS: EITHER THE CREW GOES, OR I DO.
IS THIS ABOUT THE NANOCON THING?
I'M BEING ***MOCKED***. OPENLY AND IN FRONT OF OTHERS.

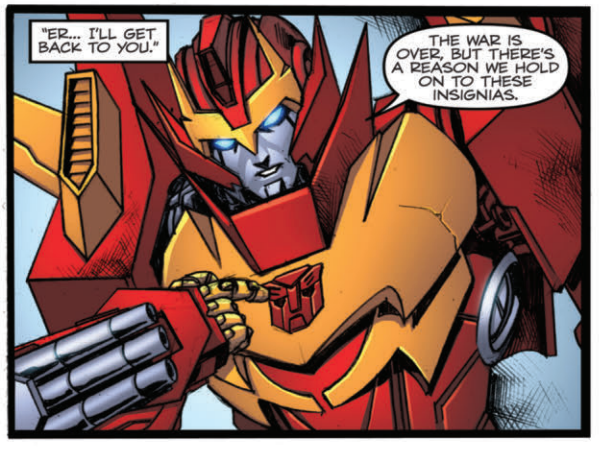

ULTRA MAGNUS IS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE A FIGURE OF FUN!
YOU KNOW WHAT? I ACTUALLY THINK THIS IS GOOD FOR YOU. IT SHOWS THAT THE CREW HAVE TAKEN YOU TO THEIR HEARTS. WHAT YOU SEE AS INSUBORDINATION IS ACTUALLY AFFECTION.
AFFECTION.
YOU'RE AN UNNERVING GUY. YOU CAN BE A BIT—DETACHED. REFERRING TO YOURSELF IN THE THIRD PERSON DOESN'T HELP, EITHER.
THE NANOCON INCIDENT REMINDS EVERYONE THAT UNDERNEATH THE PROTOCOLS AND THE ON-THE-SPOT FINES, YOU'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT TO THE REST OF US. FROM EMBARRASSING THINGS HAPPEN TO YOU.
EMBARRASSING THINGS NEVER USED TO HAPPEN TO ME WHEN I WORKED ALONE. EVERYTHING'S CHANGED.
INCLUDING YOU—AND FOR THE BETTER. YOU'RE LOOSENING UP, LITTLE BY LITTLE—AND PEOPLE ADMIRE YOU FOR THAT.
THE DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER OF THE TYREST ACCORD MUST NEVER CHANGE. IN A LAWLESS UNIVERSE, HE IS THE ONE CONSTANT.
NOW YOU'RE JUST DOING THAT TO WIND ME UP.
THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE—I CAN TELL.
WE STILL HAVEN'T MADE CONTACT WITH THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT. I KNOW YOU THINK THEY'VE TAKEN A VOW OF RADIO SILENCE, BUT STILL...THE UNIVERSE IS INNATELY HOSTILE, AND A CITY OF PACIFISTS IS PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE.
VULNERABLE? YOU'VE NEVER MET THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT, HAVE YOU?
"DAI ATLAS AND THE CIRCLE TOOK ME IN WHEN I WAS FURTHEST FROM THE LIGHT. THEY LOOKED BEYOND MY DECEPTICON BADGE AND SHOWED ME A BETTER WAY.
"AND YES, THEIRS WAS A PACIFIST CULTURE—BUT ALL THAT CHANGED WHEN I UNWITTINGLY LED THE ENEMY TO THEIR DOOR.
"THE CIRCLE MADE A DECISION: THEY BROKE COVER, THEY LIFTED CRYSTAL CITY OUT OF THE GROUND...
"...AND THEY CUT THE ENEMY TO SHREDS.
"TRANSLATION: THEY CAN LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES."

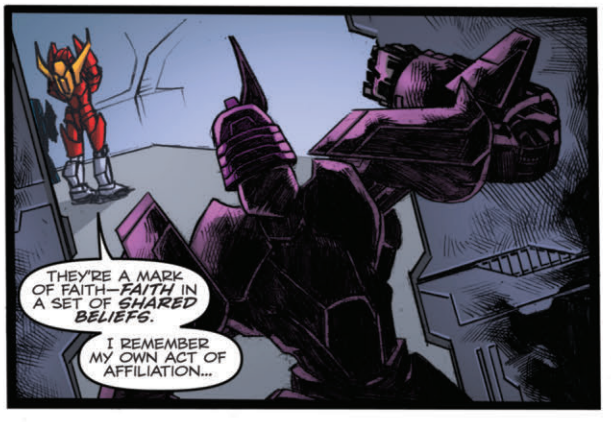
2: SACRAMENTS AND CEREMONIES
"PRIMUS IS IN THE GAPS BETWEEN YOUR CIRCUITS AND THE SOUND YOU MAKE WHEN YOU CHANGE SHAPE. HE IS THE GLOW BEHIND YOUR EYES AND THE SHEEN IN THE CURVE OF THE WORLD."
BEACHCOMBER OF IBEX, THE PRIMAL PROPHECIES: A NEW INTERPRETATION.
I'M SORRY, TAILGATE, BUT WE'RE ON A TIGHT SCHEDULE. I DON'T THINK SWERVE IS GONNA SHOW.
HE PROMISED...
MAYBE SO—BUT IN TEN MINUTES WE'LL BE IN ORBIT AROUND THEOPHANY, THEN IT'S STRAIGHT DOWN TO CRYSTAL CITY.
JUST A BIT LONGER?
OKAY, PEOPLE—YOUR TIMES, PLEASE.
TEN MINUTES.
FIVE MINUTES.
EIGHT SECONDS.
EIGHT SECONDS...? WOW.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
JACKPOT'S TAKING BETS ON THE SPEECH: HOW LONG BEFORE RODIMUS SAYS "'TIL ALL ARE ONE"?
WINNER GETS FREE DRINKS ALL NIGHT. WE HAVEN'T TOLD SWERVE YET.
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT: YOU LEFT GRAFFITI INSIDE ULTRA MAGNUS?
YEAH, DON'T PRETEND YOU'RE NOT IMPRESSED.
WHAT DOES IT SAY?
IT SAYS, "THE DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER OF THE TYREST ACCORD CAN DULY APPOINT MY SHINY METAL—"
ASSUMING THAT'S EVERYONE, WE'LL BEGIN!

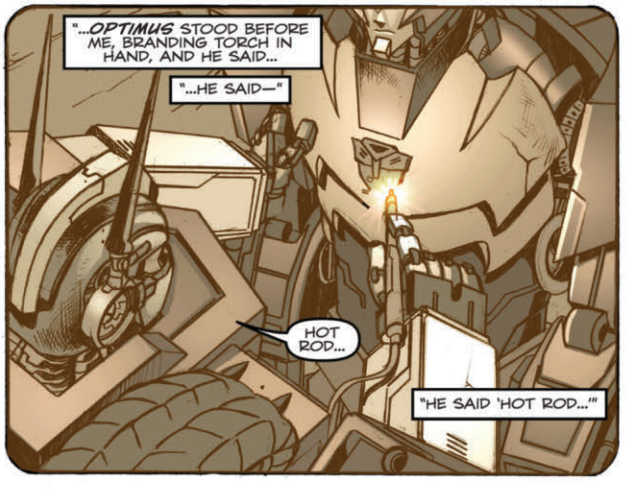

WE ARE GATHERED HERE TODAY TO CELEBRATE TAILGATE'S DESIRE TO BECOME AN AUTOBOT—AN IMPORTANT GESTURE THAT BODES WELL FOR A FUTURE WHEN ALL ARE ONE.
FIVE SECONDS! THAT COUNTS!
ER... REWIND TELLS ME THAT THE ACT OF AFFILIATION WAS LAST PERFORMED TEN YEARS AGO, WHEN AMBULON JOINED OUR RANKS.


WHERE IS AMBULON?
MEDIBAY. THE OFF-LINERS ARE PLAYING UP.
SORRY—SOME AUTOBOTS GOT SUCKED OUT THE SHIP BEFORE YOU AND I JOINED THE CREW.
THE WHO?


"THEY'VE BEEN OFFLINE FOR WEEKS NOW. BUT TEN MINUTES AGO, THEY MOVED—ALL OF THEM, ALL AT ONCE. THEY SQUEEZED THEIR AUDIO SENSORS SO HARD WE THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO CRUSH THEIR OWN BRAIN MODULES. WE HAD TO CLAMP THEIR HANDS.
"RATCHET THINKS THE LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM'S PLAYING UP. YOU'RE A THEORETICIAN—GOT ANY THEORIES?"


"ER... I'LL GET BACK TO YOU."
THE WAR IS OVER, BUT THERE'S A REASON WE HOLD ON TO THESE INSIGNIAS.


THEY'RE A MARK OF FAITH—FAITH IN A SET OF SHARED BELIEFS.
I REMEMBER MY OWN ACT OF AFFILIATION...


"...OPTIMUS STOOD BEFORE ME, BRANDING TORCH IN HAND, AND HE SAID...
"...HE SAID—"
HOT ROD...
"HE SAID 'HOT ROD...'"

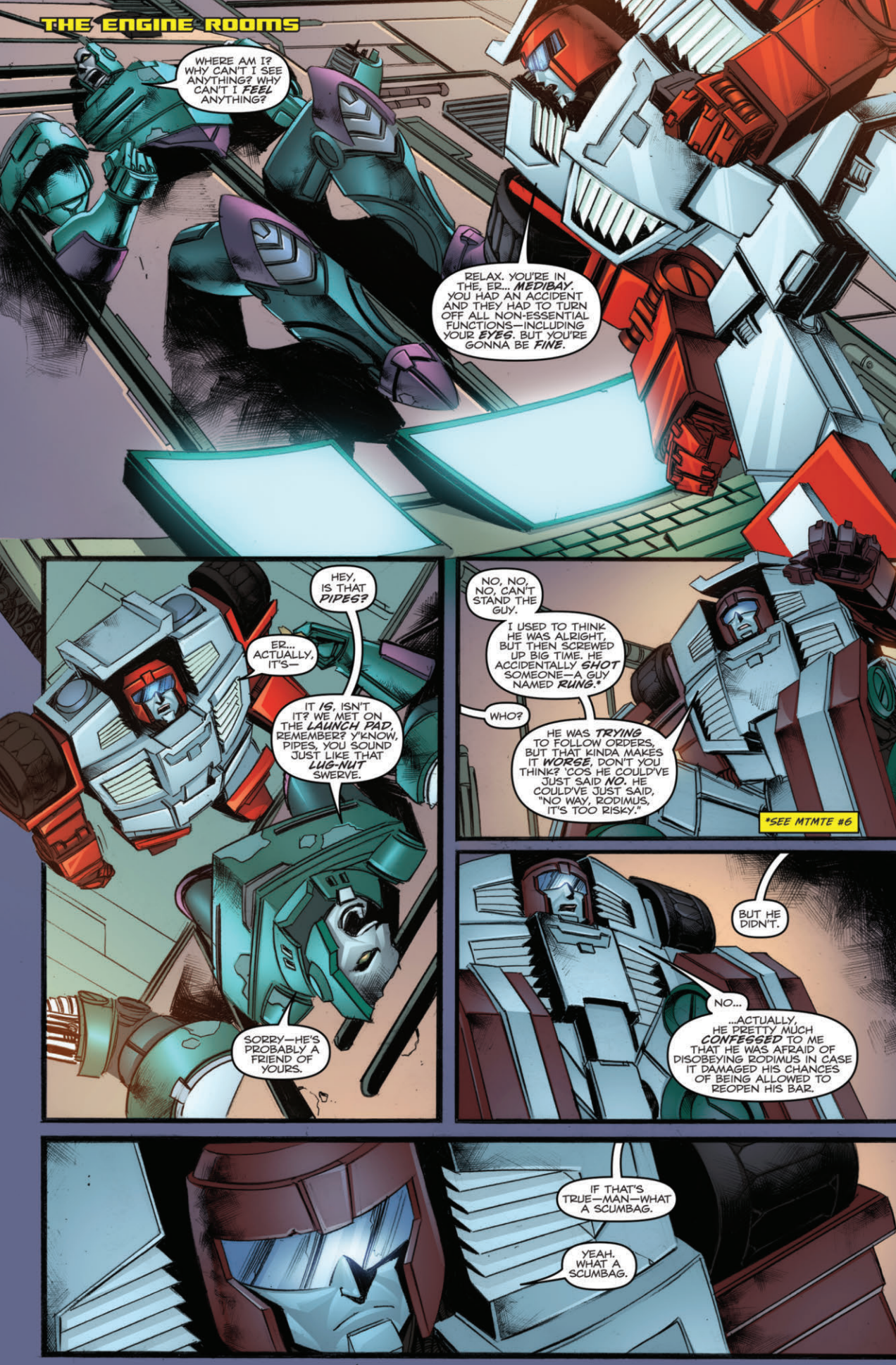
TO BE HONEST I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT HE SAID, BUT KNOWING OPTIMUS IT WOULD'VE BEEN VERY, VERY WISE.
TAILGATE, I HOPE MY WORDS WILL RESONATE WITH YOU IN THE SAME WAY. NOW, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO SAY?
ACTUALLY, I'VE PREPARED A SHORT—
NO? GOOD!

OKAY, NOW HOLD STILL WHILE I JUST...
HSSSS
ER, RODIMUS?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
WAITAMINUTE. THAT'S—I THINK THAT'S OLD CYBERTRONIAN.
DID I WRITE THAT? I DON'T REMEMBER WRITING THAT.
IT SAYS "LET ME OUT."
WHY WOULD I WRITE THAT?
YOU WOULDN'T. BUT MAYBE SOMEONE ELSE WOULD.
I THINK YOU WERE CHANNELLING, OR—OR SOMETHING DARKER.
POSSESSION?
OKAY, LET ME VERY CAREFULLY TAKE THE P WORD AND PUT IT GENTLY IN THE BOX MARKED "COMPLETE AND UTTER GUFF."
ALRIGHT THEN, YOU EXPLAIN IT.
IT'S OBVIOUSLY SOME SORT OF DEFERRED MOTION COMMAND—A REACTION THAT'S BEEN DELAYED MILLIONS OF YEARS.
WHAT? YOU JUST MADE THAT UP.
GUYS? I'VE GOT SWERVE IN MY EAR. HE SAYS ORE'S JUST COME BACK TO LIFE.
YOU TIMED THAT DELIBERATELY.
I'M SERIOUS! HE SAID, "THE BLUE DUOBOT'S JUST STARTED TALKING TO ME, WHAT DO I DO, HE'S ASKING ALL THESE QUESTIONS—
"—I HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING YET, I AM OFFICIALLY SCARED WITLESS, TELL THE OTHERS BUT NOT THE BIT ABOUT ME BEING SCARED WITLESS."

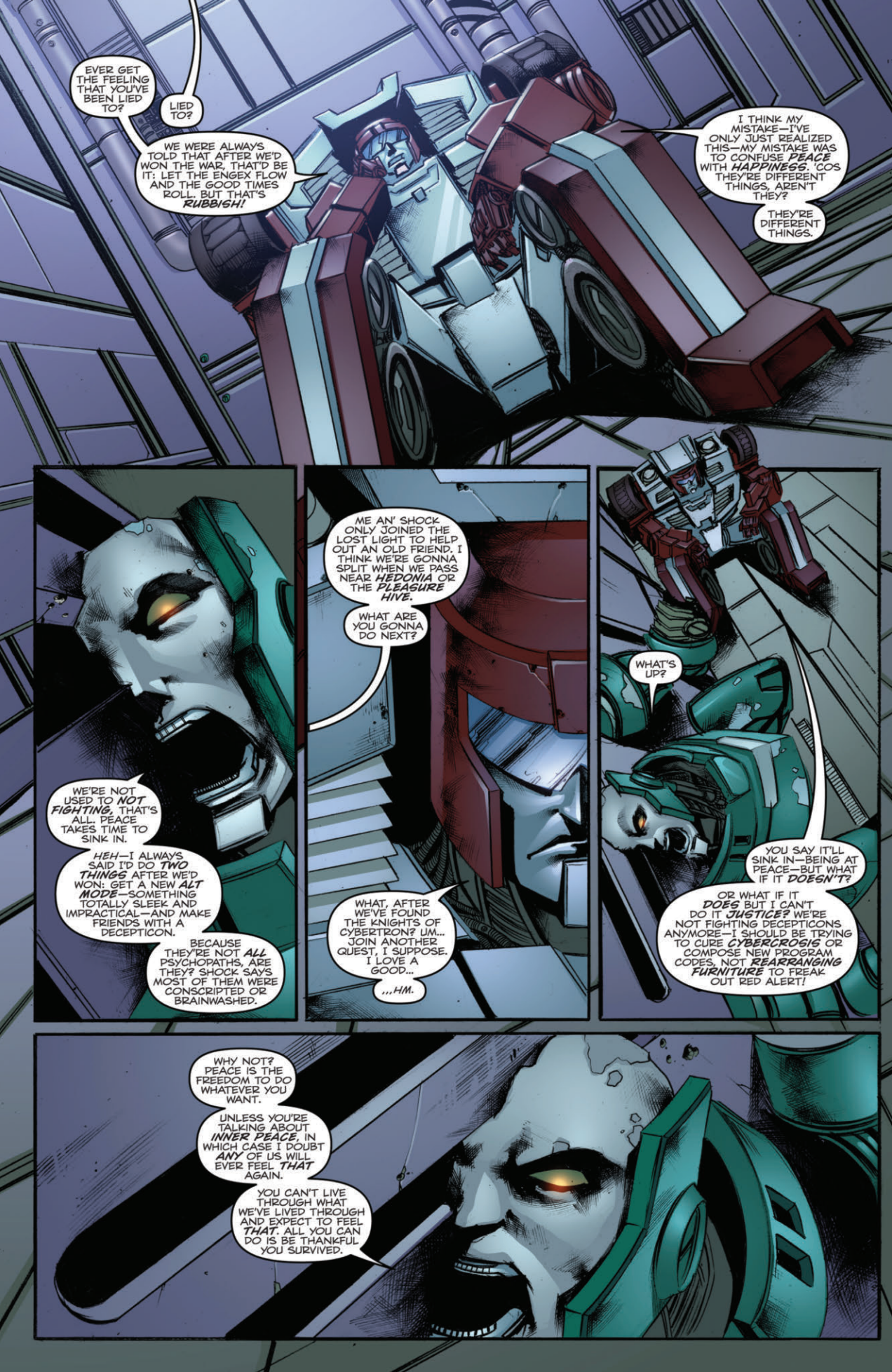
THIS ISN'T FUNNY.
ORE'S INTEGRATED WITH THE ENGINES NOW. IF HE'S ALIVE AGAIN—AND I DON'T KNOW HOW THAT'S EVEN POSSIBLE—BUT IF HE'S ALIVE AND HE PANICS, THE ENERGY SURGE COULD TRIGGER A QUANTUM JUMP AND WE COULD END UP—ANYWHERE.
TELL SWERVE TO KEEP ORE CALM, AND TO NOT MENTION WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.
SORRY TO INTERRUPT THE ESCALATING DRAMA, BUT WE'VE GOT COMPANY.
WHO IS IT?
GUESS. IT'S BIG—IT'S GRAY—IT'S TAXPAYER-FUNDED...
OH, GREAT...
"...IT'S THE GALACTIC COUNCIL."
THE BENIGN INTERVENTION
THEY'RE HAILING US.
ON SCREEN. I'M NOT IN THE MOOD FOR THIS.
AS I SUSPECTED: CYBERTRONIANS.
AS I SUSPECTED: A FLESHLING IN A STUPID HAT.

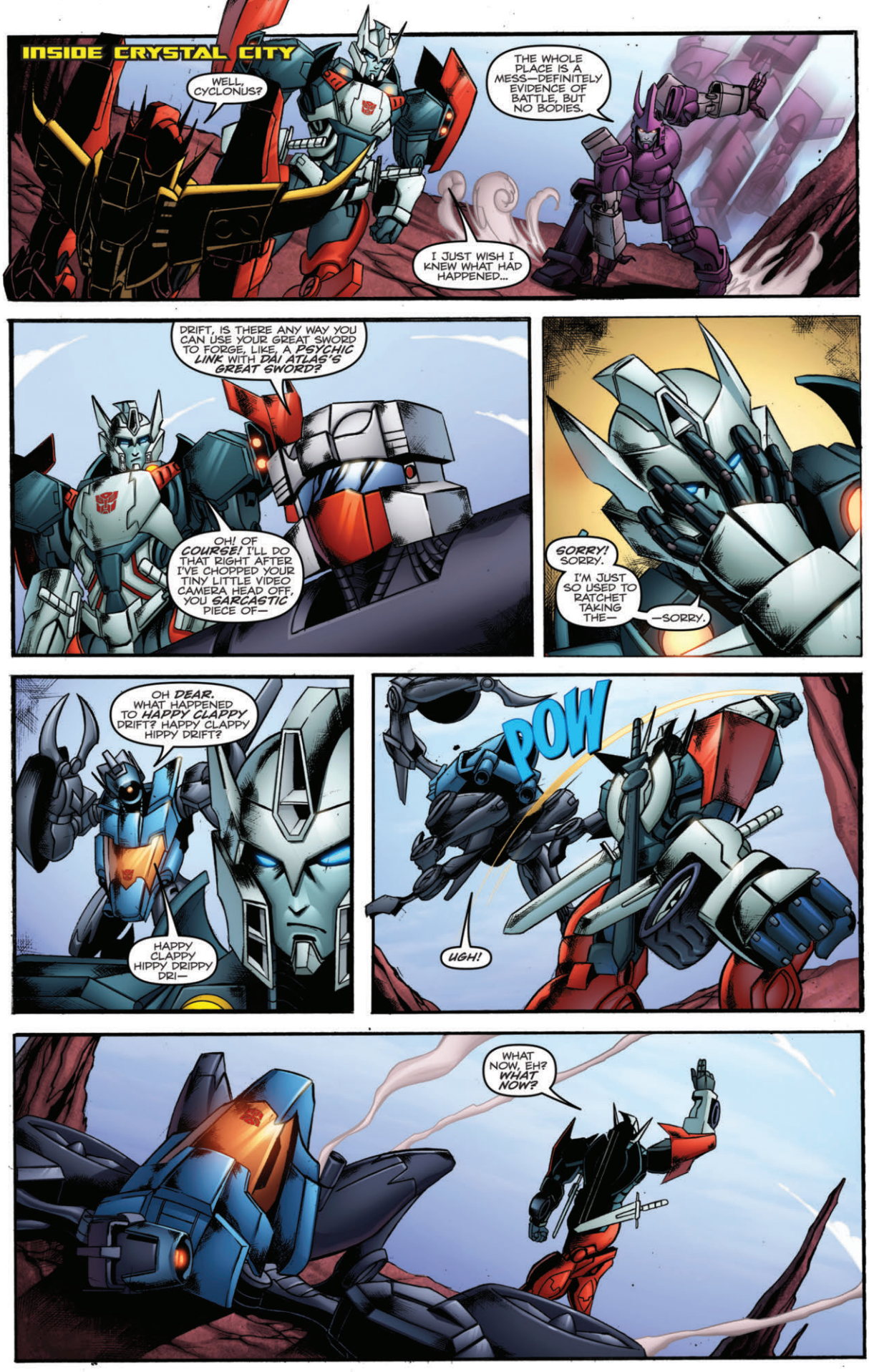
I AM CAPTAIN K'GARD OF THE BENIGN INTERVENTION. I REPRESENT THE PEACEKEEPING WING OF THE GALACTIC COUNCIL. AND YOU ARE?
RODIMUS.
RODIMUS PRIME.
YOU'RE TRESPASSING, CAPTAIN. THIS IS COUNCIL TERRITORY.
OKAY, ONE? IT ISN'T. AND TWO, EVEN IF IT IS? I DON'T CARE. I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOUR AUTHORITY. HAT OR NO HAT.
PERHAPS I SHOULD HANDLE THIS. MY NAME IS—
PLEASE, NO INTRODUCTIONS ARE NECESSARY. IT'S A PLEASURE TO FINALLY MEET THE ONE TYREST TRUSTS ABOVE ALL OTHERS.
WE WERE NOT AWARE THIS WAS COUNCIL TERRITORY. THERE IS A CYBERTRONIAN SETTLEMENT ON THE PLANET BELOW.
THE SETTLEMENT IS DESERTED.
IMPOSSIBLE.
MAGNUS— THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. HE'S LYING.
THIS SECTOR OF SPACE HAS BEEN ANNEXED BY THE COUNCIL UNDER SECTION 6 OF THE CODE OF INTERPLENETARY CONFLICT.
MAYBE SO—BUT SURELY SECTION 14 TAKES PRECEDENCE.
NOT IF SUSPENDED UNDER ARTICLE 4.
WHICH CANNOT APPLY UNLESS SUB-SECTION 7 IS SATISFIED.
THE SUB-SECTION 7 DEFENSE— SNEAKY.
DON'T PRETEND YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT.
I KNOW MAGNUS IS STRANGLING HIM WITH HIS OWN RED TAPE...
THIS IS PROBABLY THE BEST DAY OF HIS LIFE.
YOUR ARGUMENT IS PERSUASIVE, ULTRA MAGNUS. CHOOSE A DELEGATION WHILE I READY THE TELEPORT.

WHAT DID YOU JUST DO?
I ARGUED THAT CRYSTAL CITY IS A SITE OF RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE AND THEREFORE WE HAVE A RIGHT OF ACCESS. HE'S GIVING US AN HOUR ON THE SURFACE.
ONLY AN HOUR?
HE'S SKEPTICAL—AS A RACE WE'RE NOT KNOWN FOR OUR RELIGIOSITY. OUR DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC TENDS TO BE OUR FOUR-MILLION-YEAR CIVIL WAR.
YEAH, 'COS WAR AND RELIGION NEVER GO TOGETHER...
IF I ASK WHO THE GALACTIC COUNCIL ARE, WILL EVERYONE LAUGH AT ME?
THEY'RE A COALITION OF HIGHER-ORDER CIVILIZATIONS REPRESENTING THOUSANDS OF STAR SYSTEMS.
"THEY WERE ESTABLISHED IN RESPONSE TO THE SHATTERING, WITH A MANDATE TO NEGOTIATE NON-AGGRESSION PACTS BETWEEN WORLDS. IN RECENT TIMES THEY'VE TAKEN ON MORE OF A POLICING ROLE.
"A LOT OF RACES PUT A LOT OF FAITH IN THE COUNCIL TO KEEP THEM SAFE. WE ARE ONE OF THE FEW RACES TO HAVE BEEN BLACKLISTED."
"COOL."
"NO, WHIRL, NOT COOL."
OKAY, HISTORY LESSON OVER. WHO WANTS TO GO TO CRYSTAL—


THE ENGINE ROOMS
WHERE AM I? WHY CAN'T I SEE ANYTHING? WHY CAN'T I FEEL ANYTHING?
RELAX. YOU'RE IN THE, ER... MEDIBAY. YOU HAD AN ACCIDENT AND THEY HAD TO TURN OFF ALL NON-ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS—INCLUDING YOUR EYES. BUT YOU'RE GONNA BE FINE.
HEY, IS THAT PIPES?
ER... ACTUALLY, IT'S—
IT IS, ISN'T IT? WE MET ON THE LAUNCH PAD, REMEMBER? Y'KNOW, PIPES, YOU SOUND JUST LIKE THAT LUG-NUT SWERVE.
SORRY—HE'S PROBABLY A FRIEND OF YOURS.
NO, NO, NO, CAN'T STAND THE GUY.
I USED TO THINK HE WAS ALRIGHT, BUT THEN SCREWED UP BIG TIME. HE ACCIDENTALLY SHOT SOMEONE—A GUY NAMED RUNG.*
WHO?
HE WAS TRYING TO FOLLOW ORDERS, BUT THAT KINDA MAKES IT WORSE, DON'T YOU THINK? 'COS HE COULD'VE JUST SAID NO. HE COULD'VE JUST SAID, "NO WAY, RODIMUS, IT'S TOO RISKY."
*SEE MTMTE #6
BUT HE DIDN'T.
NO... ...ACTUALLY, HE PRETTY MUCH CONFESSED TO ME THAT HE WAS AFRAID OF DISOBEYING RODIMUS IN CASE IT DAMAGED HIS CHANCES OF BEING ALLOWED TO REOPEN HIS BAR.
IF THAT'S TRUE—MAN—WHAT A SCUMBAG.
YEAH. WHAT A SCUMBAG.

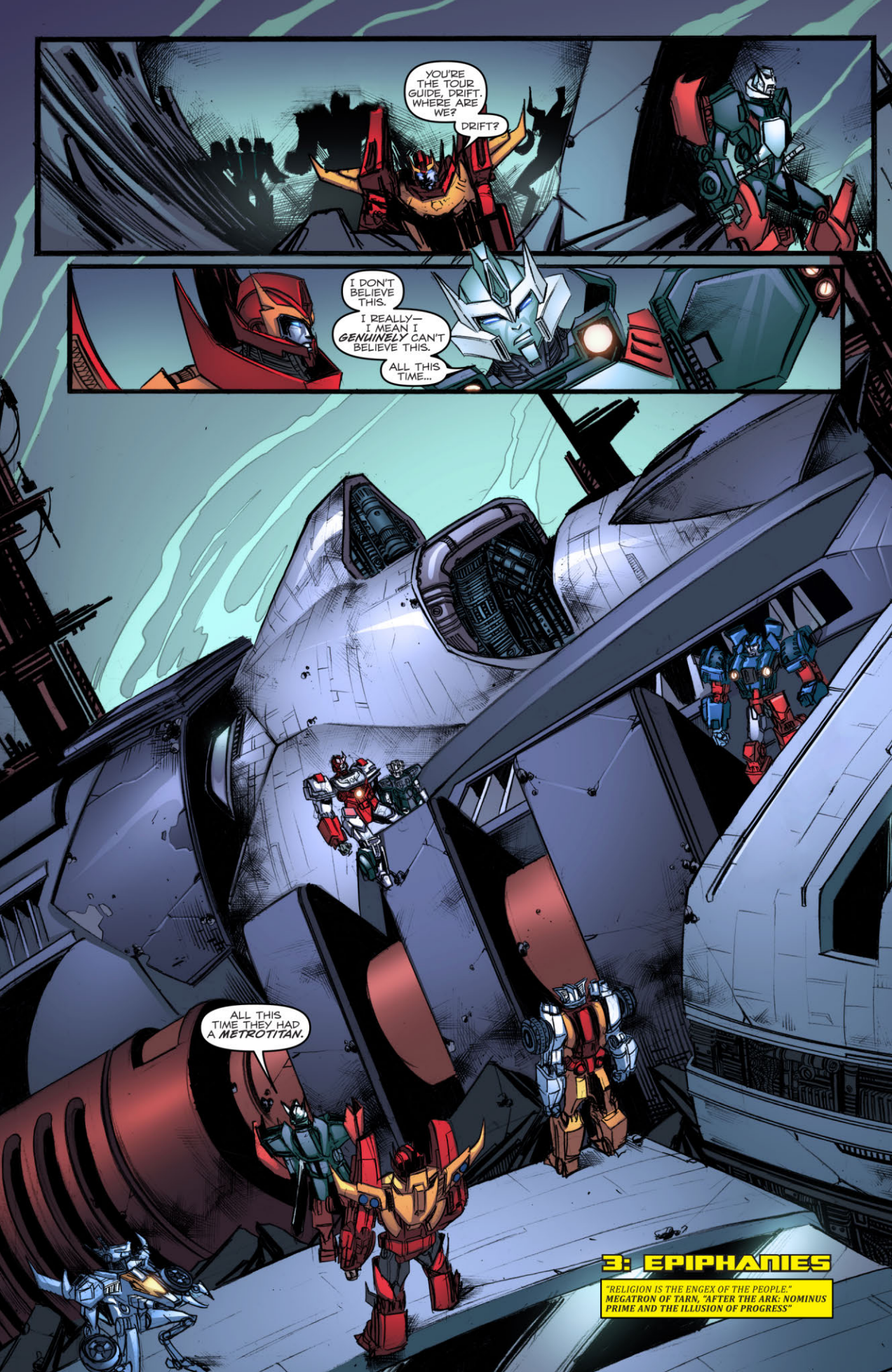
TEN MILES OUTSIDE CRYSTAL—
—CITY?
NOTHING TINGLES LIKE A TELEPORT. HOW COME WE DON'T TELEPORT EVERYWHERE, BRAINSTORM?
'COS IT'S BAD FOR YOU.
WHEREAS ALL THOSE WEAPONS YOU BUILD—
ARE BAD FOR OTHER PEOPLE.
SO! THE COUNCIL TOOK IT UPON THEMSELVES TO DECIDE WHICH OF MY CREW GETS TO VISIT CRYSTAL CITY! FASCISTS!
YOU REALLY DON'T LIKE THE COUNCIL, DO YOU?
I THINK IT'S MAINLY THE HATS.
TSCHE-CHU-CHU-CHE-TSCHU
YOU SOUND UPSET, DRIFT. WHAT'S UP?
WHAT'S UP?
WHAT'S UP?!
LOOK OVER THERE!
"YOU THINK THE CITY'S SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE THAT?!"


EVER GET THE FEELING THAT YOU'VE BEEN LIED TO?
LIED TO?
WE WERE ALWAYS TOLD THAT AFTER WE'D WON THE WAR, THAT'D BE IT: LET THE ENGEX FLOW AND THE GOOD TIMES ROLL. BUT THAT'S *RUBBISH!*
I THINK MY MISTAKE—I'VE ONLY JUST REALIZED THIS—MY MISTAKE WAS TO CONFUSE *PEACE* WITH *HAPPINESS*. 'COS THEY'RE DIFFERENT THINGS, AREN'T THEY?
THEY'RE DIFFERENT THINGS.
WE'RE NOT USED TO *NOT FIGHTING*, THAT'S ALL. PEACE TAKES TIME TO SINK IN.
HEH—I ALWAYS SAID I'D DO *TWO THINGS* AFTER WE'D WON: GET A NEW *ALT MODE*—SOMETHING TOTALLY SLEEK AND IMPRACTICAL—AND MAKE FRIENDS WITH A DECEPTICON.
BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT *ALL* PSYCHOPATHS, ARE THEY? SHOCK SAYS MOST OF THEM WERE CONSCRIPTED OR BRAINWASHED.
ME AN' SHOCK ONLY JOINED THE LOST LIGHT TO HELP OUT AN OLD FRIEND. I THINK WE'RE GONNA SPLIT WHEN WE PASS NEAR *HEDONIA* OR THE *PLEASURE HIVE*.
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO NEXT?
WHAT, AFTER WE'VE FOUND THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON? UM... JOIN ANOTHER QUEST, I SUPPOSE. I LOVE A GOOD...
...HM.
WHAT'S UP?
YOU SAY IT'LL SINK IN—BEING AT PEACE—BUT WHAT IF IT *DOESN'T*?
OR WHAT IF IT *DOES* BUT I CAN'T DO IT *JUSTICE*? WE'RE NOT FIGHTING DECEPTICONS ANYMORE—I SHOULD BE TRYING TO CURE *CYBERCROSIS* OR COMPOSE NEW PROGRAM CODES, NOT *REARRANGING FURNITURE* TO FREAK OUT RED ALERT!
WHY NOT? PEACE IS THE FREEDOM TO DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
UNLESS YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT *INNER PEACE*, IN WHICH CASE I DOUBT *ANY* OF US WILL EVER FEEL *THAT* AGAIN.
YOU CAN'T LIVE THROUGH WHAT WE'VE LIVED THROUGH AND EXPECT TO FEEL *THAT*. ALL YOU CAN DO IS BE THANKFUL YOU SURVIVED.


INSIDE CRYSTAL CITY
WELL, CYCLONUS?
THE WHOLE PLACE IS A MESS—DEFINITELY EVIDENCE OF BATTLE, BUT NO BODIES.
I JUST WISH I KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED...
DRIFT, IS THERE ANY WAY YOU CAN USE YOUR GREAT SWORD TO FORGE, LIKE, A PSYCHIC LINK WITH DAI ATLAS'S GREAT SWORD?
OH! OF COURSE! I'LL DO THAT RIGHT AFTER I'VE CHOPPED YOUR TINY LITTLE VIDEO CAMERA HEAD OFF, YOU SARCASTIC PIECE OF—
SORRY! SORRY.
I'M JUST SO USED TO RATCHET TAKING THE—
—SORRY.
OH DEAR. WHAT HAPPENED TO HAPPY CLAPPY DRIFT? HAPPY CLAPPY HIPPY DRIFT?
HAPPY CLAPPY HIPPY DRIPPY DRI—
POW
UGH!
WHAT NOW, EH? WHAT NOW?

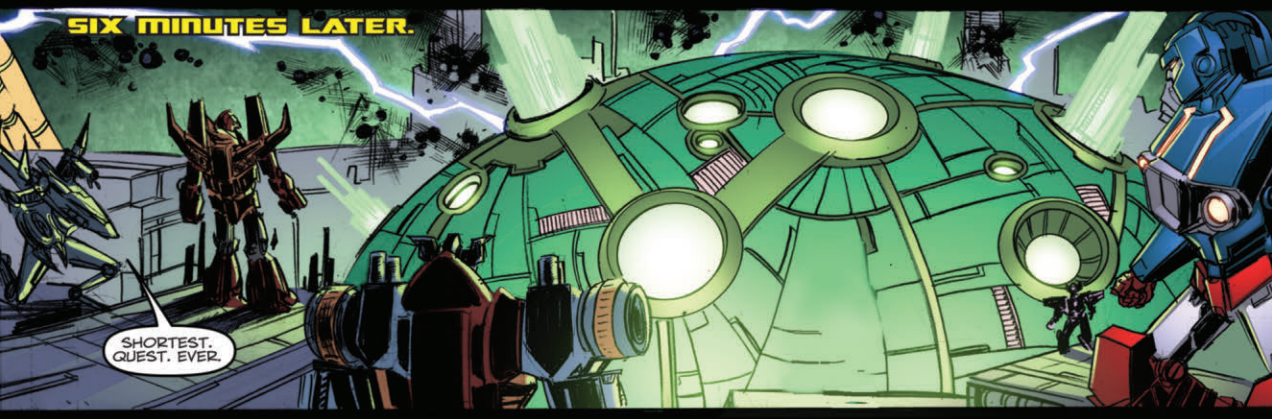
WE'RE *HERE*, AREN'T WE?
WE'VE HAD FAULTY QUANTUM ENGINES AND SPARKEATERS AND AUTOBOTS SHOOTING AUTOBOTS, BUT WE'VE MADE IT THIS FAR, HAVEN'T WE?
AND FOR *WHAT?* FOR *THIS?* FOR THIS *MASSIVE DEAD END?!*
I'VE DONE EVERYTHING I WAS SUPPOSED TO DO! I HAVEN'T ASKED QUESTIONS, I HAVEN'T SAID NO—I'VE JUST *DONE* IT!
SO THE LEAST YOU CAN DO—THE VERY *LEAST* YOU CAN DO—IS HELP ME OUT!
NO...?
AARGH!
YOU CAN HIT WHIRL AGAIN IF IT HELPS.
K-K-K-K-
-KRACK-KOOM

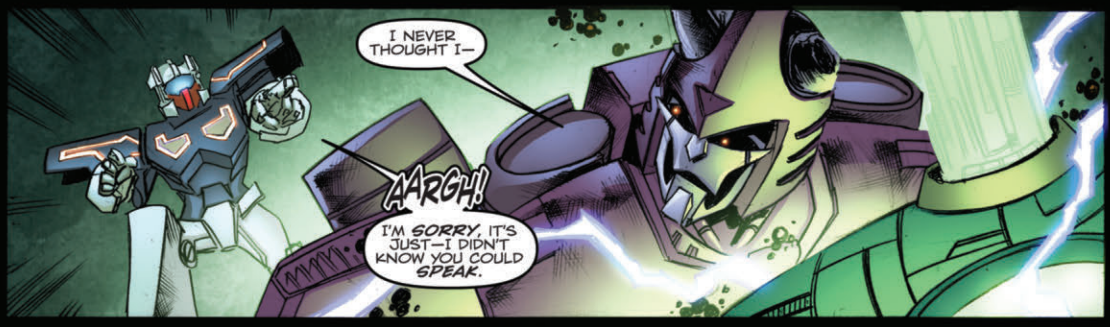
ULTRA MAGNUS—I'M SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING.
THE BENIGN INTERVENTION
HOW ABOUT "SORRY FOR TELEPORTING YOU HERE AGAINST YOUR WILL"?
I SHOULD BE DOWN THERE, WITH THE OTHERS.
I DON'T THINK SO.
I'M SORRY?
YOU'RE BETTER THAN THEM. BETTER THAN THAT PETULANT CAPTAIN OF YOURS, ANYWAY.
ULTRA MAGNUS, I DON'T THINK YOU REALIZE JUST HOW YOU'RE PERCEIVED BY THOSE OF US FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO LIVE BEYOND THE FRINGES OF THE CYBERTRONIAN WAR.
YOU'RE A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER OF A MILLION YEARS' STANDING WHO HAS SHRUGGED OFF EVERYTHING HIS ENEMIES HAVE THROWN AT HIM AND KEPT ON GOING, DRIVEN BY YOUR BELIEF IN THE LAW.
FORGIVE ME, BUT THERE'S NO OTHER WORD FOR IT: YOU ARE LEGENDARY.
I'M NOT EASILY FLATTERED—
YOU SURPRISE ME.
—BUT I AM EASILY EMBARRASSED. WHY AM I HERE, CAPTAIN?
YOU'RE HERE SO THAT I CAN ASK YOU, ON BEHALF OF THE GALACTIC COUNCIL...
...TO JOIN US.

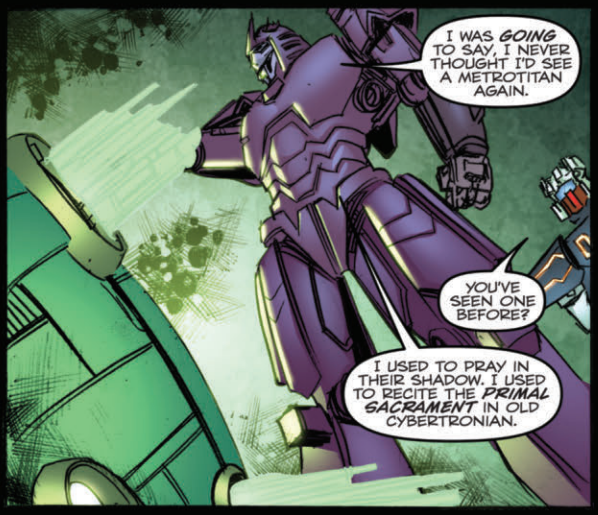

YOU'RE THE TOUR GUIDE, DRIFT. WHERE ARE WE?
DRIFT?
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS.
I REALLY— I MEAN I GENUINELY CAN'T BELIEVE THIS.
ALL THIS TIME...
ALL THIS TIME THEY HAD A METROTITAN.
3: EPIPHANIES
"RELIGION IS THE ENGEX OF THE PEOPLE."
MEGATRON OF TARN, "AFTER THE ARK: NOMINUS PRIME AND THE ILLUSION OF PROGRESS"

METROTITANS—I SHOULD KNOW WHO THEY ARE, RIGHT?
THEY WERE THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON'S CHOSEN MODE OF TRANSPORT: LIVING CITIES CAPABLE OF TELEPORTING ACROSS VAST DISTANCES.
THEY HAD SUPER-SPARKS THAT ALLOWED THEM TO STRADDLE MULTIPLE PLANES OF EXISTENCE AND COMMUNE WITH THE DIVINE.
HMM. THAT WAS VERY MUCH AN EXPLANATION OF TWO HALVES...

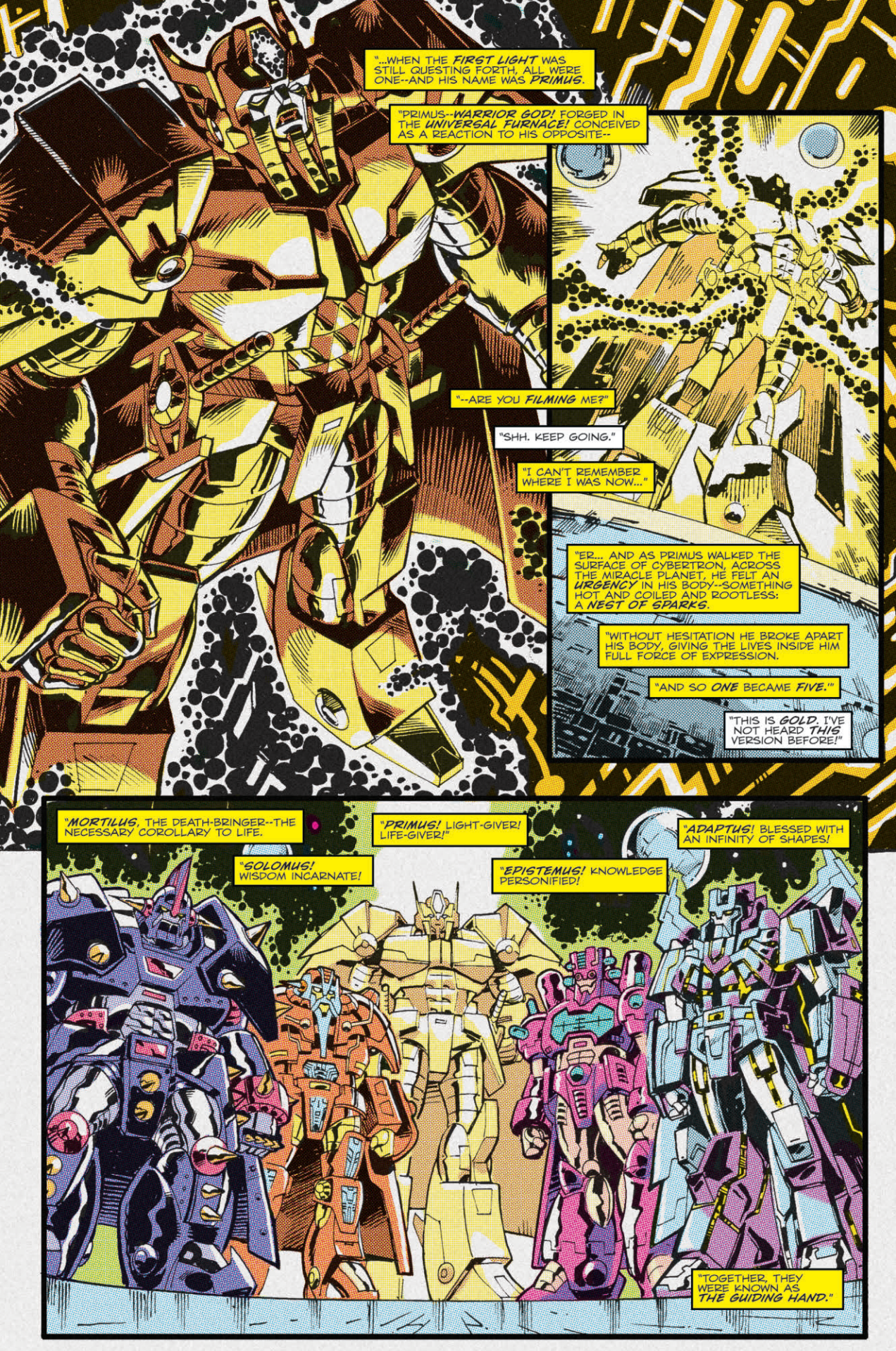
THIS METROTITAN—IT'S MASSIVE AND IT'S DEAD. I GET THAT—BUT PHYSIOLOGICALLY IT'S JUST LIKE YOU AND ME, RIGHT?
I KNOW WHERE THIS IS GOING...
I BET YOU DO!
MY FELLOW CRUSADERCONS—WE'RE GOING ON A BRAIN-QUEST!

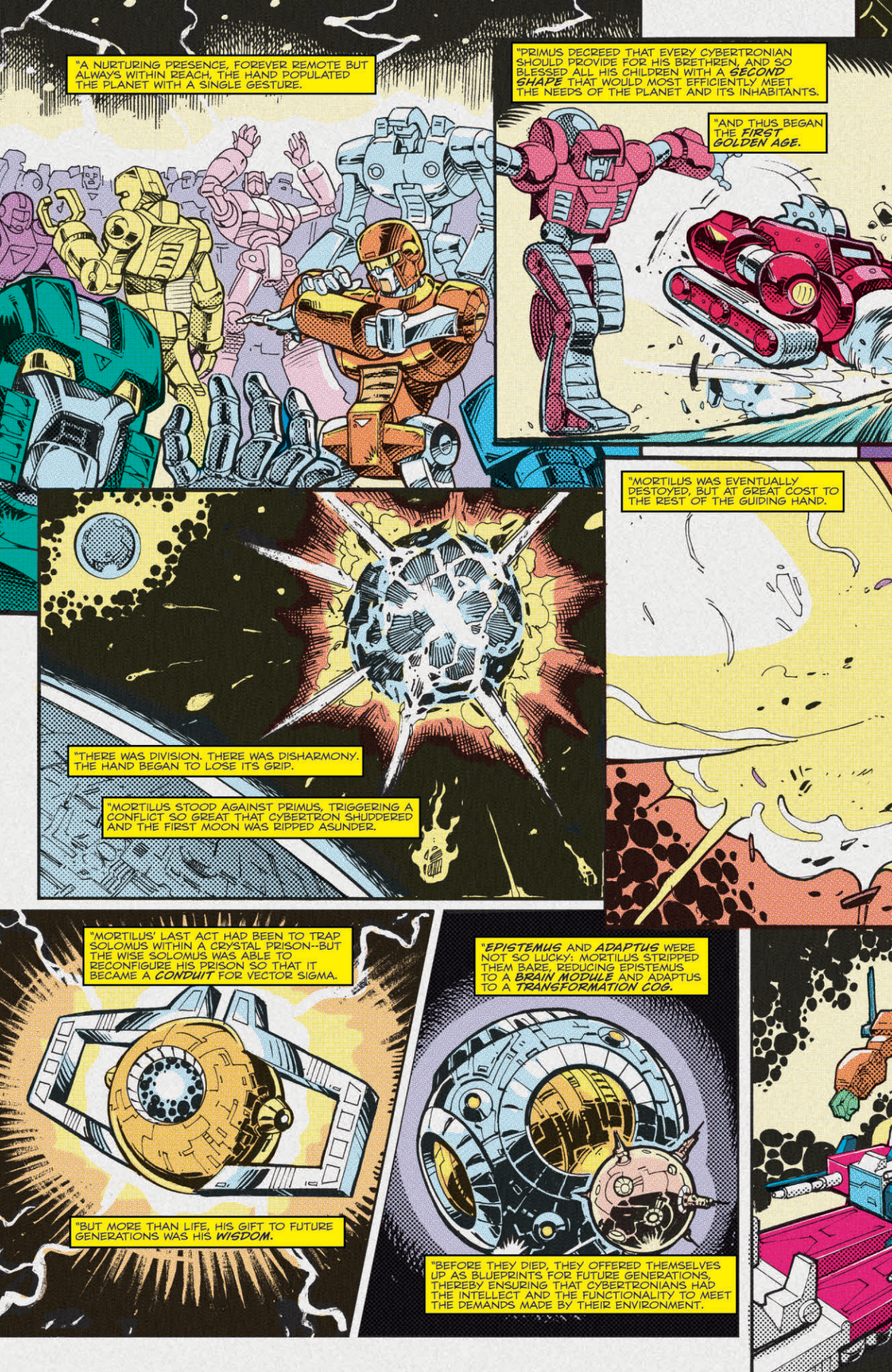

SIX MINUTES LATER.
SHORTEST. QUEST. EVER.

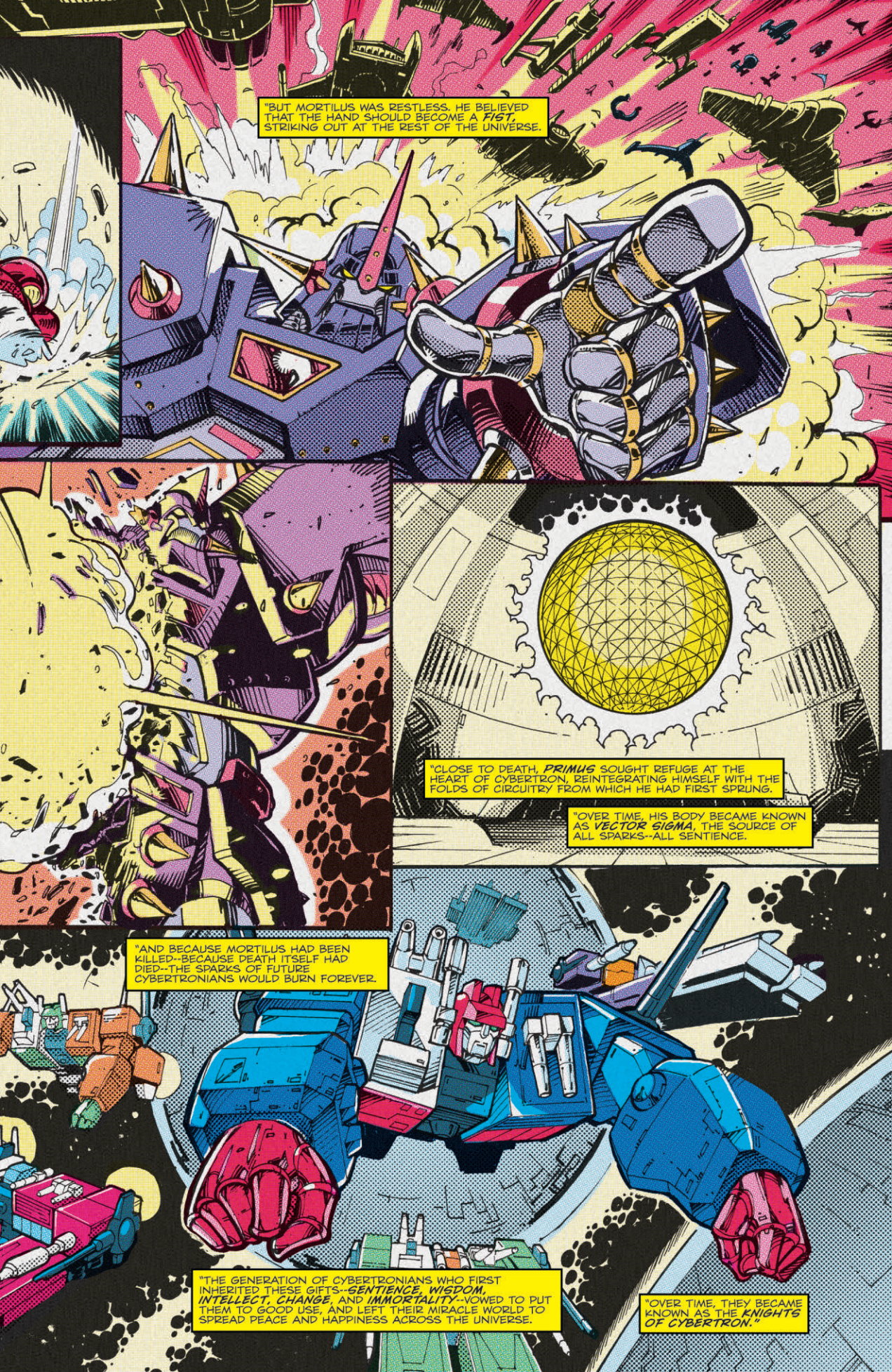

I NEVER THOUGHT I—
AARGH!
I'M SORRY, IT'S JUST—I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD SPEAK.

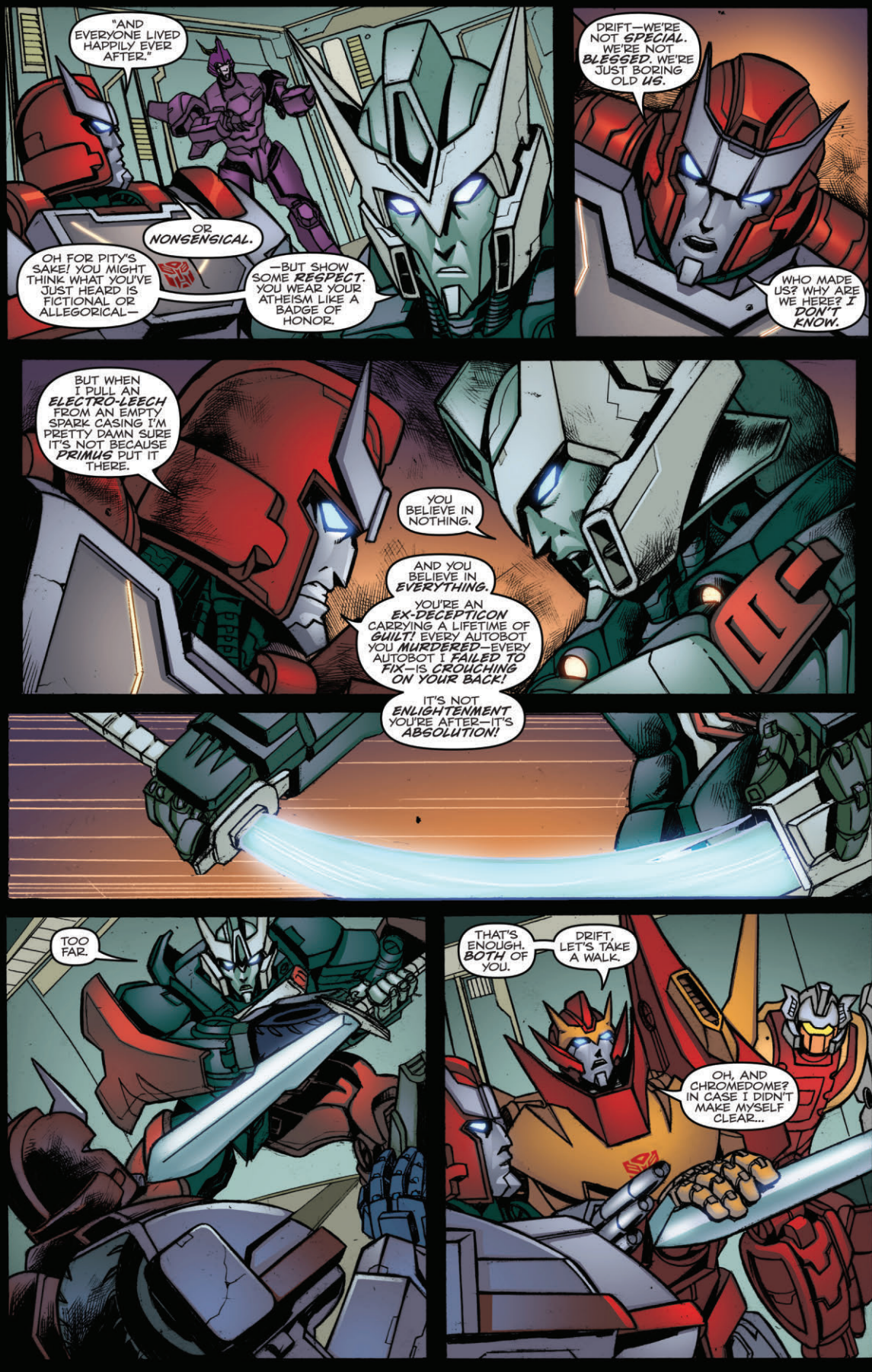

I WAS GOING TO SAY, I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE A METROTITAN AGAIN.
YOU'VE SEEN ONE BEFORE?
I USED TO PRAY IN THEIR SHADOW. I USED TO RECITE THE PRIMAL SACRAMENT IN OLD CYBERTRONIAN.

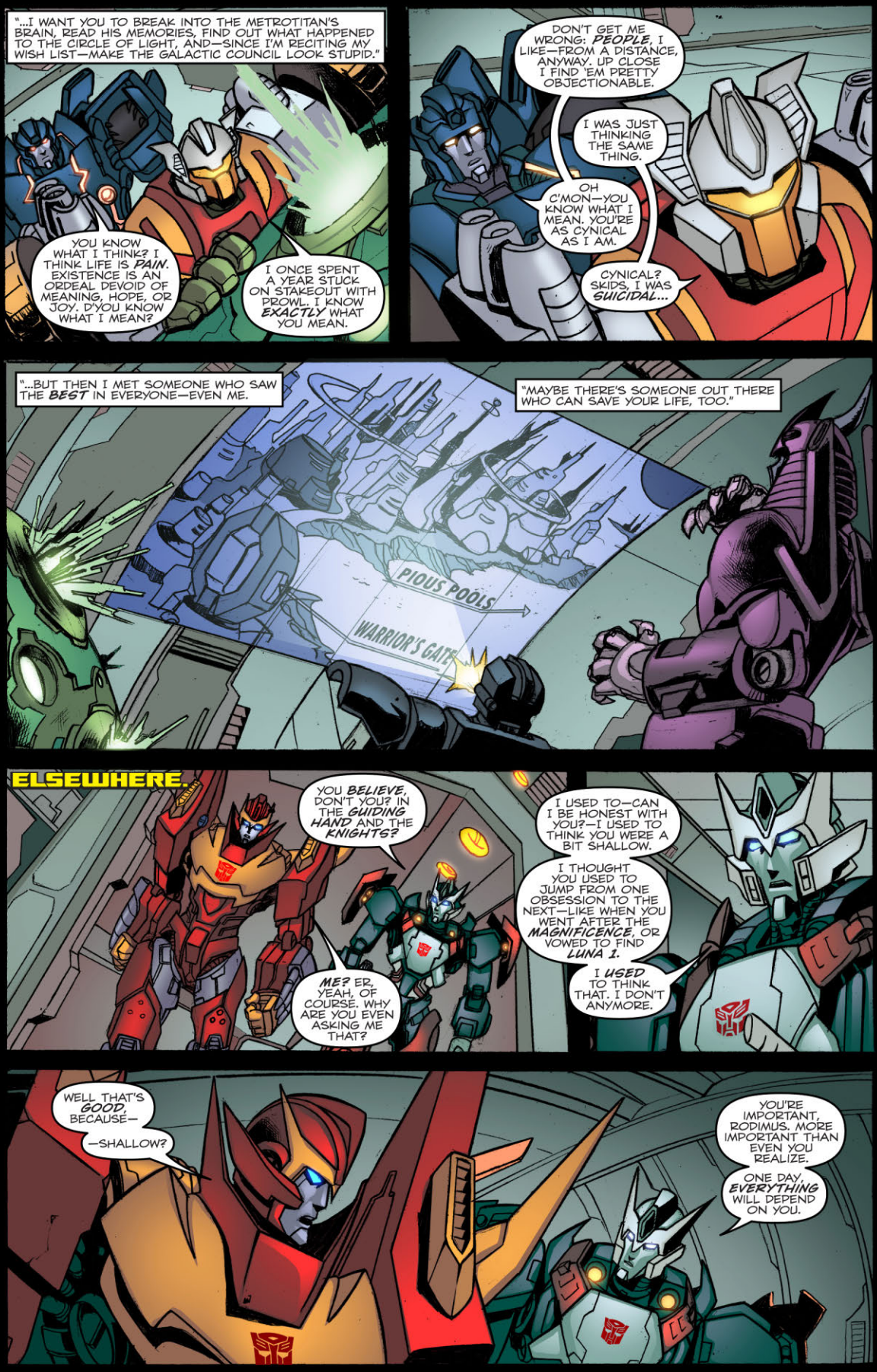
THE CREATON STORY? I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO HEAR IT DELIVERED BY—YOU KNOW—BY A BELIEVER.
I DON'T SUPPOSE...? SINCE WE'RE HERE AND EVERYTHING...
-SIGH-
"IN THE BEGINNING, MOMENTS AFTER THE FORMATTING..."


"...WHEN THE FIRST LIGHT WAS STILL QUESTING FORTH, ALL WERE ONE--AND HIS NAME WAS PRIMUS.
"PRIMUS--WARRIOR GOD! FORGED IN THE UNIVERSAL FURNACE! CONCEIVED AS A REACTION TO HIS OPPOSITE--
"--ARE YOU FILMING ME?"
"SHH. KEEP GOING."
"I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE I WAS NOW..."
"ER... AND AS PRIMUS WALKED THE SURFACE OF CYBERTRON, ACROSS THE MIRACLE PLANET, HE FELT AN URGENCY IN HIS BODY--SOMETHING HOT AND COILED AND ROOTLESS: A NEST OF SPARKS.
"WITHOUT HESITATION HE BROKE APART HIS BODY, GIVING THE LIVES INSIDE HIM FULL FORCE OF EXPRESSION.
"AND SO ONE BECAME FIVE.'"
"THIS IS GOLD. I'VE NOT HEARD THIS VERSION BEFORE!"
"MORTILUS, THE DEATH-BRINGER--THE NECESSARY COROLLARY TO LIFE.
"PRIMUS! LIGHT-GIVER! LIFE-GIVER!"
"ADAPTUS! BLESSED WITH AN INFINITY OF SHAPES!
"SOLOMUS! WISDOM INCARNATE!
"EPISTEMUS! KNOWLEDGE PERSONIFIED!
"TOGETHER, THEY WERE KNOWN AS THE GUIDING HAND."

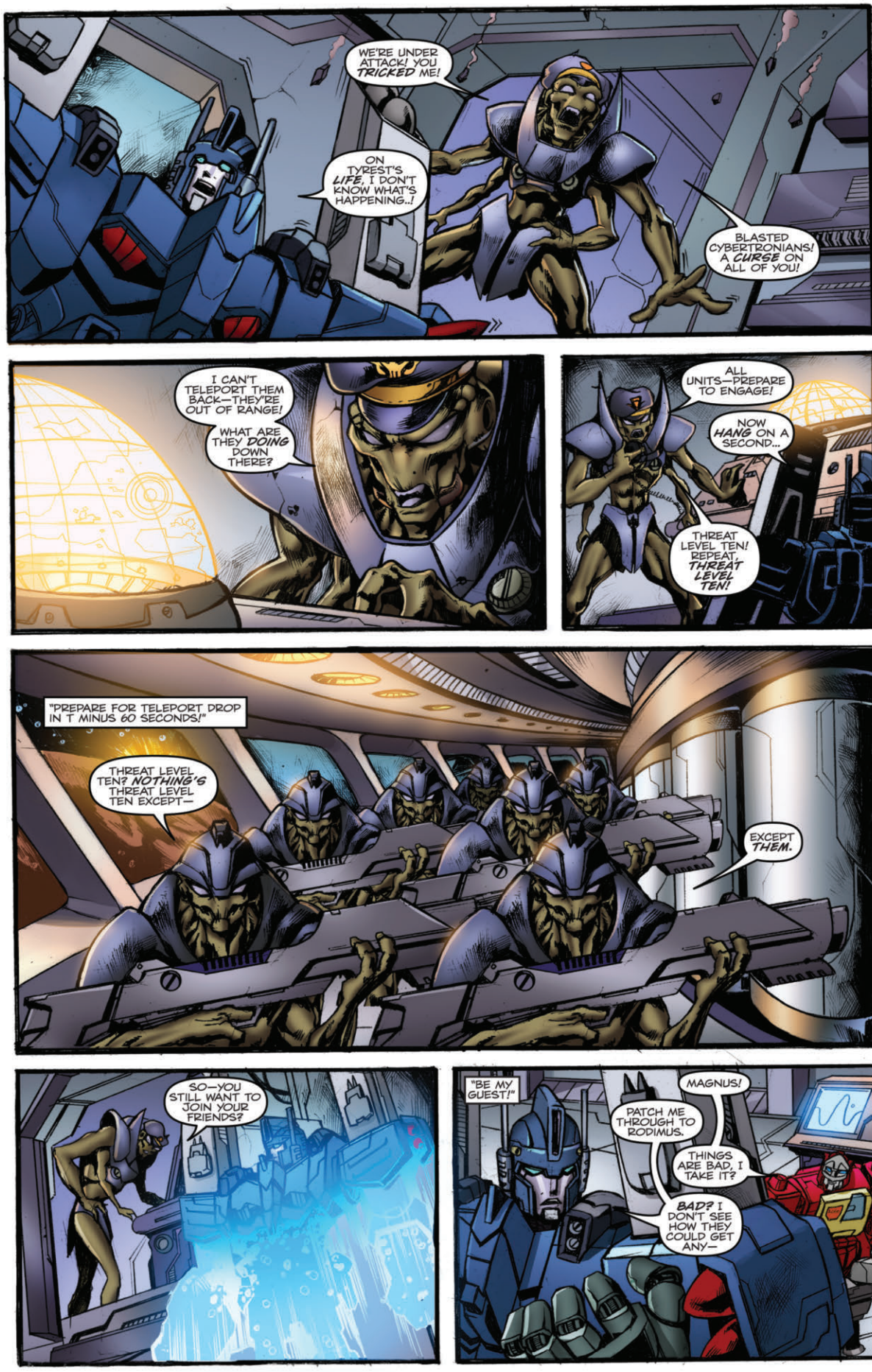

"A NURTURING PRESENCE, FOREVER REMOTE BUT ALWAYS WITHIN REACH, THE HAND POPULATED THE PLANET WITH A SINGLE GESTURE.
"PRIMUS DECREED THAT EVERY CYBERTRONIAN SHOULD PROVIDE FOR HIS BRETHREN, AND SO BLESSED ALL HIS CHILDREN WITH A SECOND SHAPE THAT WOULD MOST EFFICIENTLY MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PLANET AND ITS INHABITANTS.
"AND THUS BEGAN THE FIRST GOLDEN AGE.
"MORTILUS WAS EVENTUALLY DESTOYED, BUT AT GREAT COST TO THE REST OF THE GUIDING HAND.
"THERE WAS DIVISION. THERE WAS DISHARMONY. THE HAND BEGAN TO LOSE ITS GRIP.
"MORTILUS STOOD AGAINST PRIMUS, TRIGGERING A CONFLICT SO GREAT THAT CYBERTRON SHUDDERED AND THE FIRST MOON WAS RIPPED ASUNDER.
"MORTILUS' LAST ACT HAD BEEN TO TRAP SOLOMUS WITHIN A CRYSTAL PRISON--BUT THE WISE SOLOMUS WAS ABLE TO RECONFIGURE HIS PRISON SO THAT IT BECAME A CONDUIT FOR VECTOR SIGMA.
"BUT MORE THAN LIFE, HIS GIFT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS WAS HIS WISDOM.
"EPISTEMUS AND ADAPTUS WERE NOT SO LUCKY: MORTILUS STRIPPED THEM BARE, REDUCING EPISTEMUS TO A BRAIN MODULE AND ADAPTUS TO A TRANSFORMATION COG.
"BEFORE THEY DIED, THEY OFFERED THEMSELVES UP AS BLUEPRINTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, THEREBY ENSURING THAT CYBERTRONIANS HAD THE INTELLECT AND THE FUNCTIONALITY TO MEET THE DEMANDS MADE BY THEIR ENVIRONMENT.


"BUT MORTILUS WAS RESTLESS. HE BELIEVED THAT THE HAND SHOULD BECOME A *FIST*, STRIKING OUT AT THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE.
"CLOSE TO DEATH, *PRIMUS* SOUGHT REFUGE AT THE HEART OF CYBERTRON, REINTEGRATING HIMSELF WITH THE FOLDS OF CIRCUITRY FROM WHICH HE HAD FIRST SPRUNG.
"OVER TIME, HIS BODY BECAME KNOWN AS *VECTOR SIGMA*, THE SOURCE OF ALL SPARKS--ALL SENTIENCE.
"AND BECAUSE MORTILUS HAD BEEN KILLED--BECAUSE DEATH ITSELF HAD DIED--THE SPARKS OF FUTURE CYBERTRONIANS WOULD BURN FOREVER.
"THE GENERATION OF CYBERTRONIANS WHO FIRST INHERITED THESE GIFTS--*SENTIENCE, WISDOM, INTELLECT, CHANGE*, AND *IMMORTALITY*--VOWED TO PUT THEM TO GOOD USE, AND LEFT THEIR MIRACLE WORLD TO SPREAD PEACE AND HAPPINESS ACROSS THE UNIVERSE.
"OVER TIME, THEY BECAME KNOWN AS THE *KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON.*"


"AND EVERYONE LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER."
OR NONSENSICAL.
OH FOR PITY'S SAKE! YOU MIGHT THINK WHAT YOU'VE JUST HEARD IS FICTIONAL OR ALLEGORICAL—
—BUT SHOW SOME RESPECT. YOU WEAR YOUR ATHEISM LIKE A BADGE OF HONOR.
DRIFT—WE'RE NOT SPECIAL. WE'RE NOT BLESSED. WE'RE JUST BORING OLD US.
WHO MADE US? WHY ARE WE HERE? I DON'T KNOW.
BUT WHEN I PULL AN ELECTRO-LEECH FROM AN EMPTY SPARK CASING I'M PRETTY DAMN SURE IT'S NOT BECAUSE PRIMUS PUT IT THERE.
YOU BELIEVE IN NOTHING.
AND YOU BELIEVE IN EVERYTHING.
YOU'RE AN EX-DECEPTICON CARRYING A LIFETIME OF GUILT! EVERY AUTOBOT YOU MURDERED—EVERY AUTOBOT I FAILED TO FIX—IS CROUCHING ON YOUR BACK!
IT'S NOT ENLIGHTENMENT YOU'RE AFTER—IT'S ABSOLUTION!
TOO FAR.
THAT'S ENOUGH. BOTH OF YOU.
DRIFT, LET'S TAKE A WALK.
OH, AND CHROMEDOME? IN CASE I DIDN'T MAKE MYSELF CLEAR...

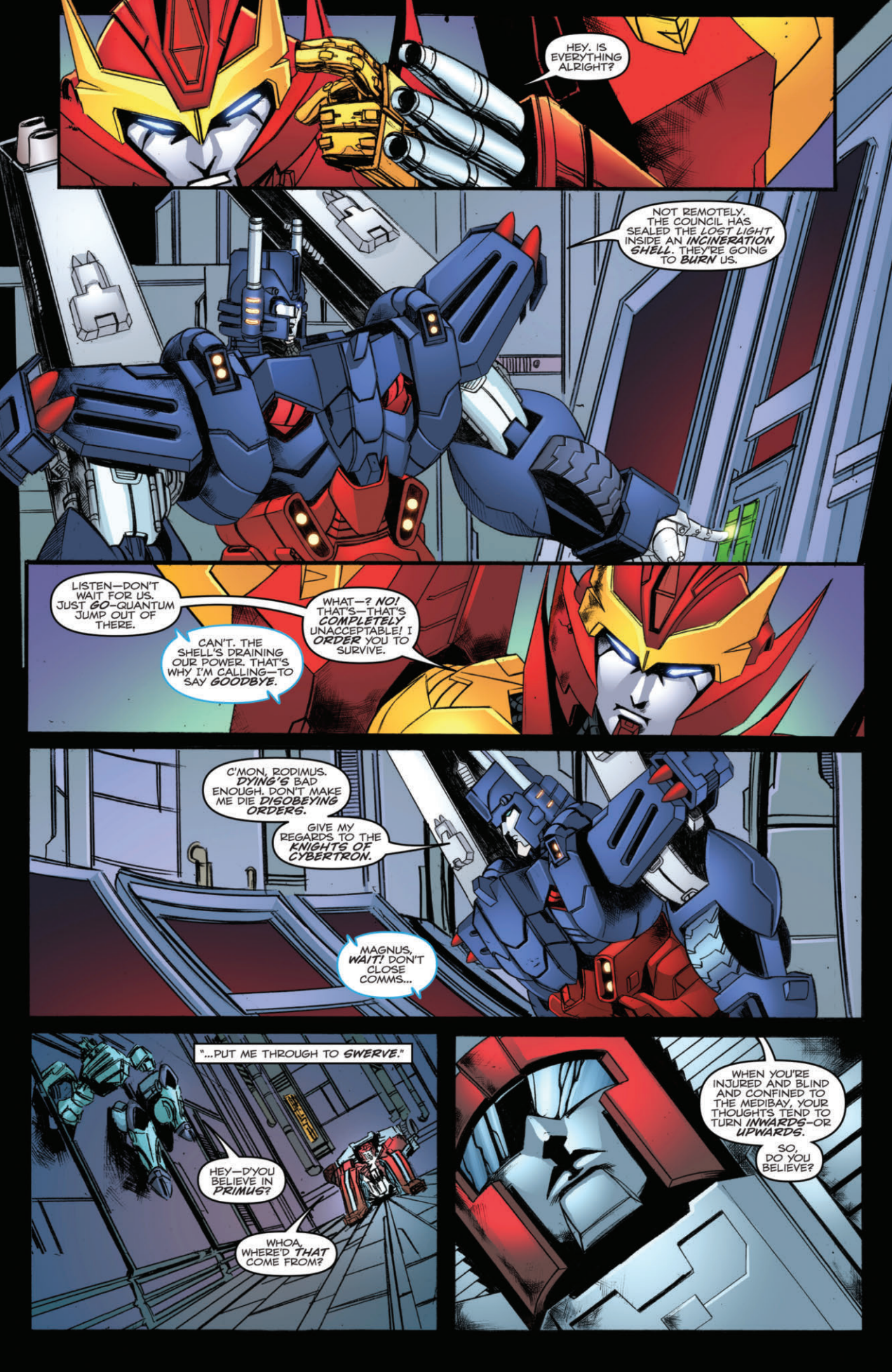

"...I WANT YOU TO BREAK INTO THE METROTITAN'S BRAIN, READ HIS MEMORIES, FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT, AND—SINCE I'M RECITING MY WISH LIST—MAKE THE GALACTIC COUNCIL LOOK STUPID."
YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK? I THINK LIFE IS PAIN. EXISTENCE IS AN ORDEAL DEVOID OF MEANING, HOPE, OR JOY. D'YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
I ONCE SPENT A YEAR STUCK ON STAKEOUT WITH PROWL. I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN.
DON'T GET ME WRONG: PEOPLE, I LIKE—FROM A DISTANCE, ANYWAY. UP CLOSE I FIND 'EM PRETTY OBJECTIONABLE.
I WAS JUST THINKING THE SAME THING.
OH C'MON—YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. YOU'RE AS CYNICAL AS I AM.
CYNICAL? SKIDS, I WAS SUICIDAL...
"...BUT THEN I MET SOMEONE WHO SAW THE BEST IN EVERYONE—EVEN ME.
"MAYBE THERE'S SOMEONE OUT THERE WHO CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE, TOO."
PIOUS POOLS
WARRIOR'S GATE
ELSEWHERE.
YOU BELIEVE, DON'T YOU? IN THE GUIDING HAND AND THE KNIGHTS?
ME? ER, YEAH, OF COURSE. WHY ARE YOU EVEN ASKING ME THAT?
I USED TO—CAN I BE HONEST WITH YOU?—I USED TO THINK YOU WERE A BIT SHALLOW.
I THOUGHT YOU USED TO JUMP FROM ONE OBSESSION TO THE NEXT—LIKE WHEN YOU WENT AFTER THE MAGNIFICENCE, OR VOWED TO FIND LUNA 1.
I USED TO THINK THAT. I DON'T ANYMORE.
WELL THAT'S GOOD, BECAUSE—
—SHALLOW?
YOU'RE IMPORTANT, RODIMUS. MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVEN YOU REALIZE.
ONE DAY, EVERYTHING WILL DEPEND ON YOU.

SLIKT
I KNOW YOU'RE THERE, REWIND. I CAN FEEL THE WEIGHT OF YOUR DISAPPROVAL.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE *INJECTING* AGAIN. YOU SAID THE SPARKEATER WAS A *ONE-OFF..!*
YES, AND SO'S THIS. NOW STAND BACK...
OKAY, THAT'S... WEIRD.
IT FEELS LIKE HE'S—
CHUNK
AARGH!
SHOOM


WE'RE UNDER ATTACK! YOU TRICKED ME!
ON TYREST'S LIFE, I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING..!
BLASTED CYBERTRONIANS! A CURSE ON ALL OF YOU!
I CAN'T TELEPORT THEM BACK—THEY'RE OUT OF RANGE!
WHAT ARE THEY DOING DOWN THERE?
ALL UNITS—PREPARE TO ENGAGE!
NOW HANG ON A SECOND...
THREAT LEVEL TEN! REPEAT, THREAT LEVEL TEN!
"PREPARE FOR TELEPORT DROP IN T MINUS 60 SECONDS!"
THREAT LEVEL TEN? NOTHING'S THREAT LEVEL TEN EXCEPT—
EXCEPT THEM.
SO—YOU STILL WANT TO JOIN YOUR FRIENDS?
"BE MY GUEST!"
MAGNUS!
PATCH ME THROUGH TO RODIMUS.
THINGS ARE BAD, I TAKE IT?
BAD? I DON'T SEE HOW THEY COULD GET ANY—

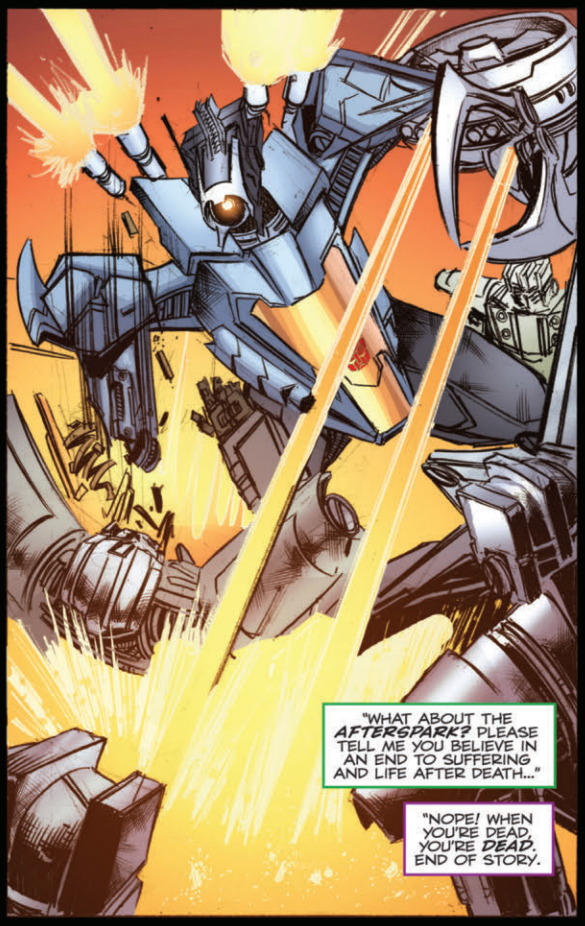
—WORSE.
FAR BELOW
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
WHAT'S THAT SHAKING?
THE METROTITAN'S ALIVE—AND SCREAMING. YOU CAN'T HEAR HIM, BUT—TRUST ME.
WHY IS HE SCREAMING?
WHEN CYBERTRON WAS REFORMATTED* HE HEARD THE SAME MESSAGE WE DID: "COME HOME." BUT HE CAN'T—THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT USED HIM TO POWER CRYSTAL CITY, AND NOW HE HASN'T GOT THE ENERGY TO TELEPORT. HE'S TOO BIG.
HE'S HOWLING IN FRUSTRATION AND WILLING HIS SPARK TO LEAVE HIS BODY, AND THE EXERTION IS KILLING HIM. I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER HE'S GOT.
*SEE TRANSFORMERS VOLUME 7: CHAOS
THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THE MESSAGE.
MESSAGE?
ON TAILGATE'S CHEST. IT DIDN'T SAY "LET ME OUT"—REWIND GOT IT WRONG—IT SAID "SET ME FREE."
THAT'S IT! THAT'S WHY THE PATIENTS IN THE MEDIBAY WERE COVERING THEIR AUDIO SENSORS! THEY COULD HEAR THE METROTITAN SCREAMING!
AND—AND—BEAR WITH ME—AND HIS SCREAM HAS HAD A SORT OF...REVIVIFYING EFFECT OF THE FEW PEOPLE WHO, ON SOME LEVEL, CAN HEAR IT!
YES! ALL THE WEIRDNESS—THE OFFLINERS, ORE'S RESURRECTION—THE NANOCONS COMING BACK TO LIFE—I BET IT ALL HAPPENED BECAUSE THE LOST LIGHT MOVED WITHIN EARSHOT OF THE SCREAM!
NO. YOU'RE NOT GOING BACK IN.
THIS METROTITAN WAS THERE AT THE BEGINNING! THROUGH HIS EYES I COULD SEE THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON, THE GUIDING HAND—EVERYTHING! PROOF, REWIND—PROOF OF GOD!

WAIT. LET'S THINK ABOUT—
RRRUUUMMBBBLLE
IT'S A SIGN!
YEAH—A SIGN THAT THE GALACTIC COUNCIL WANT TO DRAG US BACK TO THE SHIP. GUESS THEY FIGURED TELEPORTATION WAS TOO GENTLE.
WHIRL, TAKE A TEAM OUTSIDE AND KEEP 'EM BUSY 'TIL CHROMEDOME'S FINISHED. NO FATALITIES, UNDERSTAND?
I DON'T GET IT. SHOULDN'T WE BE HELPING THE METROTITAN? HE'S IN AGONY!
I'M SORRY—THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.
ACTUALLY, FEARLESS LEADER, THERE IS. CHROMEDOME SAID HE WAS TOO BIG TO TELEPORT—SO WHAT IF I MAKE HIM SMALLER?
YOUR MASS DISPLACEMENT GUN?
I'VE BEEN CARRYING IT THE WHOLE TIME. IN ITS MINIATURIZED FORM, OBVIOUSLY.
CLEVER, BUT IT CHANGES NOTHING. WE NEED THE METROTITAN HERE—THROUGH HIM, WE CAN FIND OUT ABOUT OUR ORIGINS, ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT...
BUT HE'S DYING! HE COULD BE DEAD BY THE TIME CHROMEDOME'S FINISHED! IF WE'VE GOT A CHANCE TO SAVE HIM WE SHOULD DO IT NOW!
RODIMUS? ULTRA MAGNUS FOR YOU.


HEY. IS EVERYTHING ALRIGHT?
NOT REMOTELY. THE COUNCIL HAS SEALED THE LOST LIGHT INSIDE AN INCINERATION SHELL. THEY'RE GOING TO BURN US.
LISTEN—DON'T WAIT FOR US. JUST GO-QUANTUM JUMP OUT OF THERE.
CAN'T. THE SHELL'S DRAINING OUR POWER. THAT'S WHY I'M CALLING—TO SAY GOODBYE.
WHAT—? NO! THAT'S—THAT'S COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE! I ORDER YOU TO SURVIVE.
C'MON, RODIMUS. DYING'S BAD ENOUGH. DON'T MAKE ME DIE DISOBEYING ORDERS.
GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON.
MAGNUS, WAIT! DON'T CLOSE COMMS...
"...PUT ME THROUGH TO SWERVE."
HEY—D'YOU BELIEVE IN PRIMUS?
WHOA, WHERE'D THAT COME FROM?
WHEN YOU'RE INJURED AND BLIND AND CONFINED TO THE MEDIBAY, YOUR THOUGHTS TEND TO TURN INWARDS—OR UPWARDS.
SO, DO YOU BELIEVE?

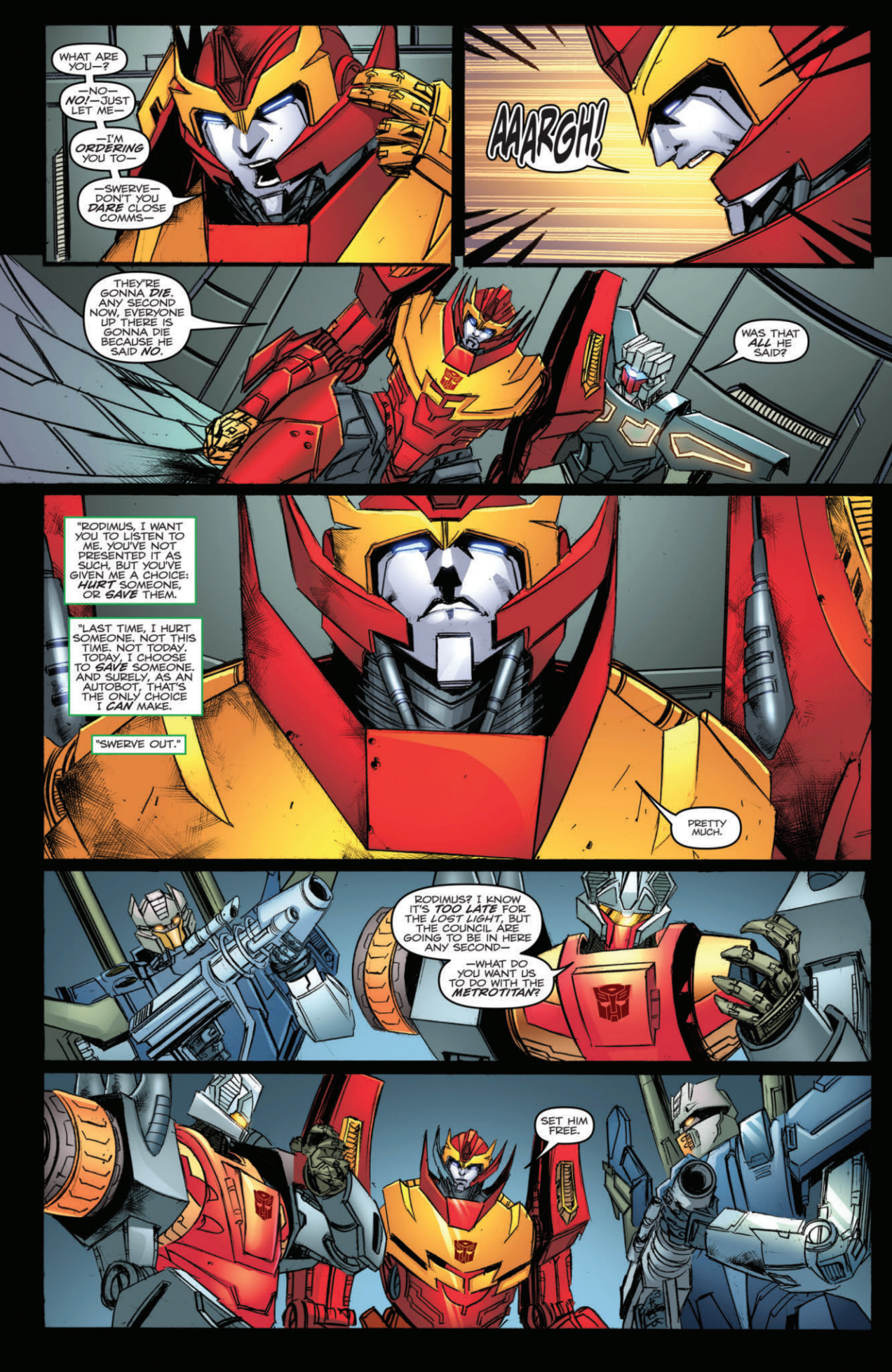
"AS IT HAPPENS, I *DO*. I MEAN, THERE'S GOTTA BE *SOMETHING* OUT THERE, RIGHT?
"COS IF THIS IS ALL IT IS—GUNSHOTS AND SPACESHIPS AND SURVIVOR'S GUILT—THEN WHAT'S THE POINT?
"IF *THAT'S* ALL IT IS, NO WONDER SO MANY PEOPLE JUST WANNA GET LIFE OVER WITH.

"AND YOU? LET ME GUESS: YOU'RE AN *EVOLUTIONARY ENGINEERIST*. YOU THINK IT'S ALL NATURALLY-OCCURRING GEARS, LEVERS, AND PULLEYS..."
"I'M NOT *ANYTHING*. I JUST THINK... *PFFT*. WHAT DO I THINK?
"I THINK THAT LIFE IS VIOLENT AND CRUEL—AND PRECIOUS. YEAH...
"I THINK YOU DON'T HAVE TO BELIEVE IN A *HIGHER POWER* TO BE OVERAWED BY THE WORLD AROUND YOU."


"WHAT ABOUT THE *AFTERSPARK*? PLEASE TELL ME YOU BELIEVE IN AN END TO SUFFERING AND LIFE AFTER DEATH..."
"NOPE! WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, YOU'RE *DEAD*. END OF STORY.

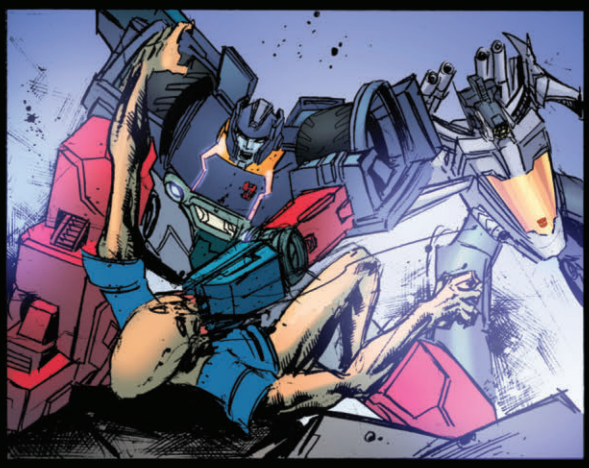
"AND YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT *DIVINE JUDGMENT*. BAD PEOPLE DO BAD THINGS, AND SOMETIMES THEY GET AWAY WITH IT.
"THERE'S NO ONE TO JUDGE US BUT OUR PEERS AND, ULTIMATELY, *OURSELVES*."

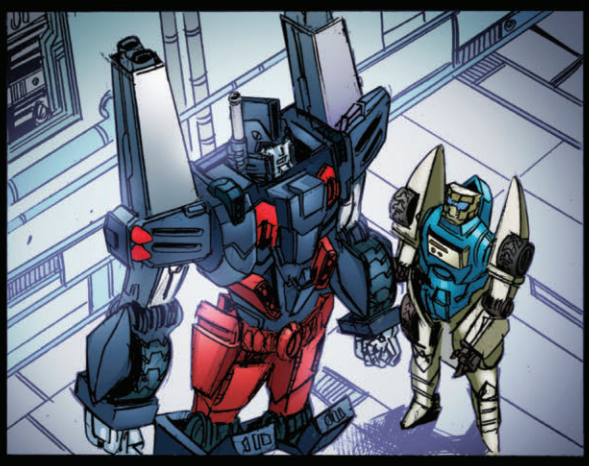
TAKE YOUR MATE *SWERVE*—HE'S BEATING HIMSELF UP BECAUSE HE SHOT WHATSISFACE, YEAH?
YEAH. *YES.* HE FEELS TERRIBLE ABOUT IT.
SEE, THAT'S *IMPORTANT.* IF IT DIDN'T BOTHER HIM, THEN HE REALLY WOULD BE A SCUMBAG.
Y'KNOW—SWERVE'S ALRIGHT. HE'S GOT THIS *REPUTATION,* AND—Y'KNOW—HE'S NOT SURE IF HE WANTS IT ANYMORE.
PLUS, *BLURR* LIKES HIM—AND HE'S *FAMOUS!*
WHEN I'M UP AND ABOUT, WE SHOULD HANG OUT—YOU AND ME AND SHOCK.
HELLO?
SORRY—SOMEONE'S CALLING ME.
RODIMUS?
SWERVE, *LISTEN:* YOU MAY NOT REALIZE IT, BUT THE *LOST LIGHT'S* IN TROUBLE. I NEED YOU TO TELL ORE THE TRUTH. AS IN *NOW.*
THE TRUTH ABOUT—WHAT, ABOUT BEING MASHED INTO THE GENERATORS? IT'LL EITHER *KILL* HIM—AGAIN!—OR SEND HIM COMPLETELY *INSANE!*
I KNOW IT'LL BE A SHOCK—IN FACT, I'M *BANKING* ON IT. HIS REACTION SHOULD RE-ENERGIZE THE ENGINES, ENABLING THE *LOST LIGHT* TO *QUANTUM JUMP* TO SAFETY.
"SHOULD"? YOU'RE RISKING AN AUTOBOT'S LIFE FOR A *"SHOULD"?*
SHOULD, COULD, MIGHT, WILL—WHATEVER! *JUST TELL HIM!*
RODIMUS, I WANT YOU TO LISTEN TO ME...

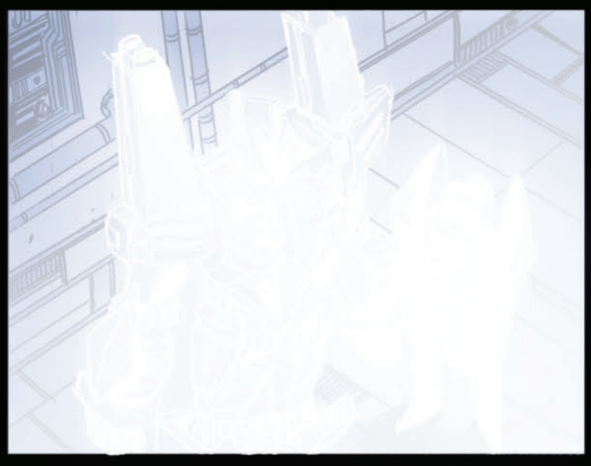

WHAT ARE YOU—?
—NO—NO!—JUST LET ME—
—I'M ORDERING YOU TO—
—SWERVE—DON'T YOU DARE CLOSE COMMS—
AAARGH!
THEY'RE GONNA DIE. ANY SECOND NOW, EVERYONE UP THERE IS GONNA DIE BECAUSE HE SAID NO.
WAS THAT ALL HE SAID?
"RODIMUS, I WANT YOU TO LISTEN TO ME. YOU'VE NOT PRESENTED IT AS SUCH, BUT YOU'VE GIVEN ME A CHOICE: HURT SOMEONE, OR SAVE THEM.
"LAST TIME, I HURT SOMEONE. NOT THIS TIME. NOT TODAY. TODAY, I CHOOSE TO SAVE SOMEONE. AND SURELY, AS AN AUTOBOT, THAT'S THE ONLY CHOICE I CAN MAKE.
"SWERVE OUT."
PRETTY MUCH.
RODIMUS? I KNOW IT'S TOO LATE FOR THE LOST LIGHT, BUT THE COUNCIL ARE GOING TO BE IN HERE ANY SECOND—
—WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO WITH THE METROTITAN?
SET HIM FREE.

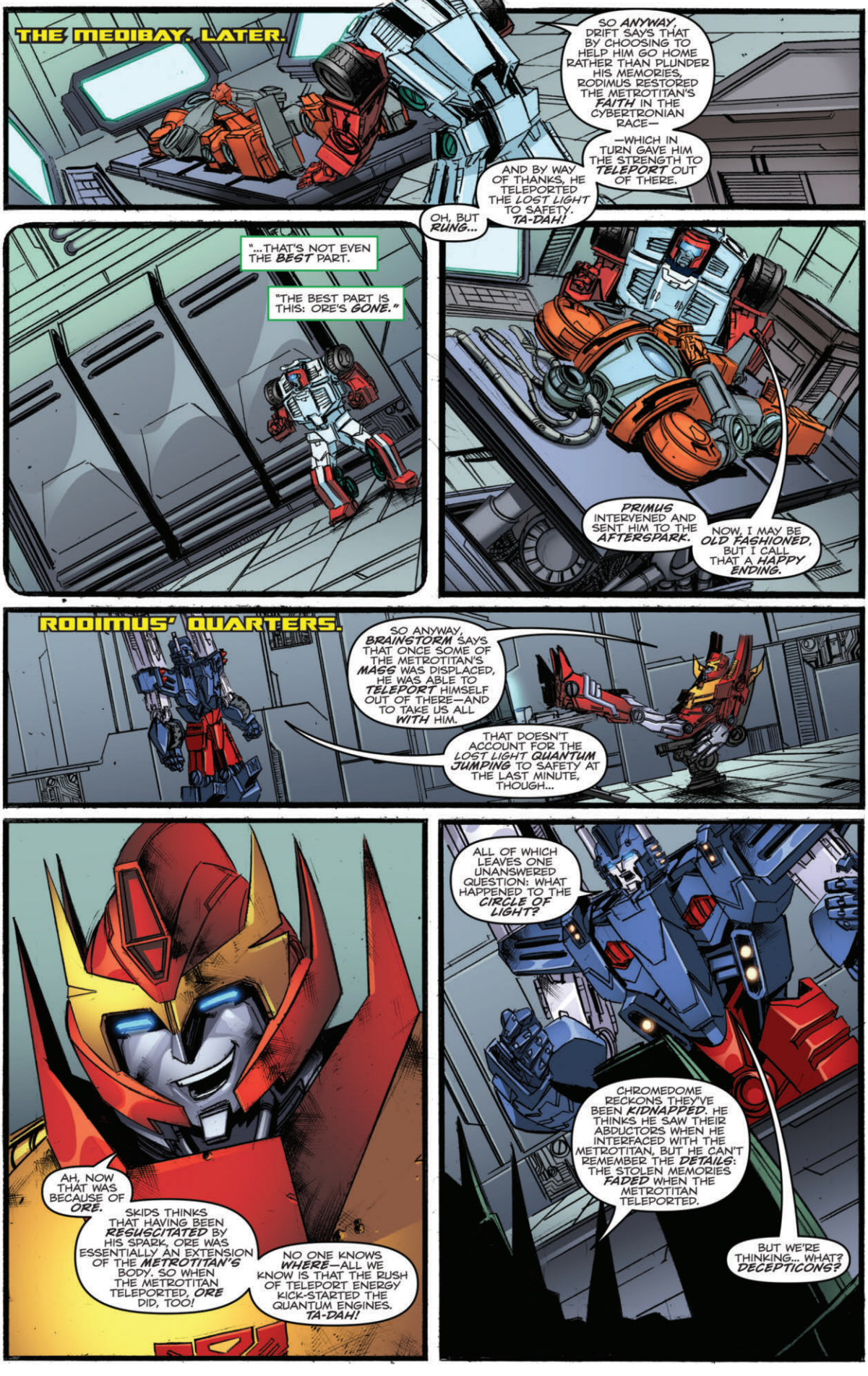
OKAY, FULL DISCLOSURE?
THIS IS PROBABLY GONNA KILL US ALL.

BRA-KOOM








THE MEDIBAY. LATER.
SO ANYWAY, DRIFT SAYS THAT BY CHOOSING TO HELP HIM GO HOME RATHER THAN PLUNDER HIS MEMORIES, RODIMUS RESTORED THE METROTITAN'S FAITH IN THE CYBERTRONIAN RACE—
—WHICH IN TURN GAVE HIM THE STRENGTH TO TELEPORT OUT OF THERE.
AND BY WAY OF THANKS, HE TELEPORTED THE LOST LIGHT TO SAFETY. TA-DAH!
OH, BUT RUNG...
"...THAT'S NOT EVEN THE BEST PART.
"THE BEST PART IS THIS: ORE'S GONE."
PRIMUS INTERVENED AND SENT HIM TO THE AFTERSPARK.
NOW, I MAY BE OLD FASHIONED, BUT I CALL THAT A HAPPY ENDING.
RODIMUS' QUARTERS.
SO ANYWAY, BRAINSTORM SAYS THAT ONCE SOME OF THE METROTITAN'S MASS WAS DISPLACED, HE WAS ABLE TO TELEPORT HIMSELF OUT OF THERE—AND TO TAKE US ALL WITH HIM.
THAT DOESN'T ACCOUNT FOR THE LOST LIGHT QUANTUM JUMPING TO SAFETY AT THE LAST MINUTE, THOUGH...
AH, NOW THAT WAS BECAUSE OF ORE.
SKIDS THINKS THAT HAVING BEEN RESUSCITATED BY HIS SPARK, ORE WAS ESSENTIALLY AN EXTENSION OF THE METROTITAN'S BODY. SO WHEN THE METROTITAN TELEPORTED, ORE DID, TOO!
NO ONE KNOWS WHERE—ALL WE KNOW IS THAT THE RUSH OF TELEPORT ENERGY KICK-STARTED THE QUANTUM ENGINES. TA-DAH!
ALL OF WHICH LEAVES ONE UNANSWERED QUESTION: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT?
CHROMEDOME RECKONS THEY'VE BEEN KIDNAPPED. HE THINKS HE SAW THEIR ABDUCTORS WHEN HE INTERFACED WITH THE METROTITAN, BUT HE CAN'T REMEMBER THE DETAILS: THE STOLEN MEMORIES FADED WHEN THE METROTITAN TELEPORTED.
BUT WE'RE THINKING... WHAT? DECEPTICONS?

ALL I KNOW IS THAT BLASTER'S INTERCEPTED REPORTS OF DECEPTICON ACTIVITY NEAR THE ARGON NEBULAE, SO THAT'S WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT.
FIRST WE FIND THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT, THEN WE FIND THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON.
IF I DIDN'T KNOW YOU BETTER I'D SAY THAT WAS A PLAN.

YEAH, I'VE DECIDED TO STOP WINGING IT. I MEAN, THERE'S BLIND FAITH AND THERE'S BLIND LUCK.
THERE ARE A THOUSAND OTHER WAYS TODAY COULD'VE ENDED, AND THEY ALL INVOLVE US DYING.
YOU WERE RIGHT: THE UNIVERSE IS INNATELY HOSTILE. AND IF PRIMUS IS A WARRIOR GOD...

"...IT'S BECAUSE A LOT OF PEOPLE OUT THERE WANT TO SEE HIS CHILDREN DEAD."
SIR—I AM SUBMITTING MY REPORT ON THE CYBERTRONIANS. IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME FOR REGIME CHANGE, IT'S NOW...
...IN MY DISCUSSIONS WITH ULTRA MAGNUS HE LET SLIP THAT THEIR FORCES ARE SPLIT.
I TAKE IT YOU ASKED HIM TO JOIN US?

"YES, AND HE REFUSED. HE SAID..."
I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T. I'M NEEDED ON THE LOST LIGHT.
SO THE NEEDS OF THIS RODIMUS AND HIS CREW OUTWEIGH THE NEEDS OF THE TRILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHO RELY ON THE COUNCIL FOR PROTECTION?
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE...

YOUR GREAT STRENGTH, ULTRA MAGNUS, IS YOUR INFLEXIBILITY. YOU'RE DETACHED AND IMPARTIAL AND REMOTE—AND THAT'S HOW IT SHOULD BE.
STAY WITH RODIMUS AND THE OTHERS TOO LONG AND THEY'LL CHANGE YOU. THEY'LL TURN YOU INTO SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT. THEY'LL TURN YOU INTO ONE OF THEM.

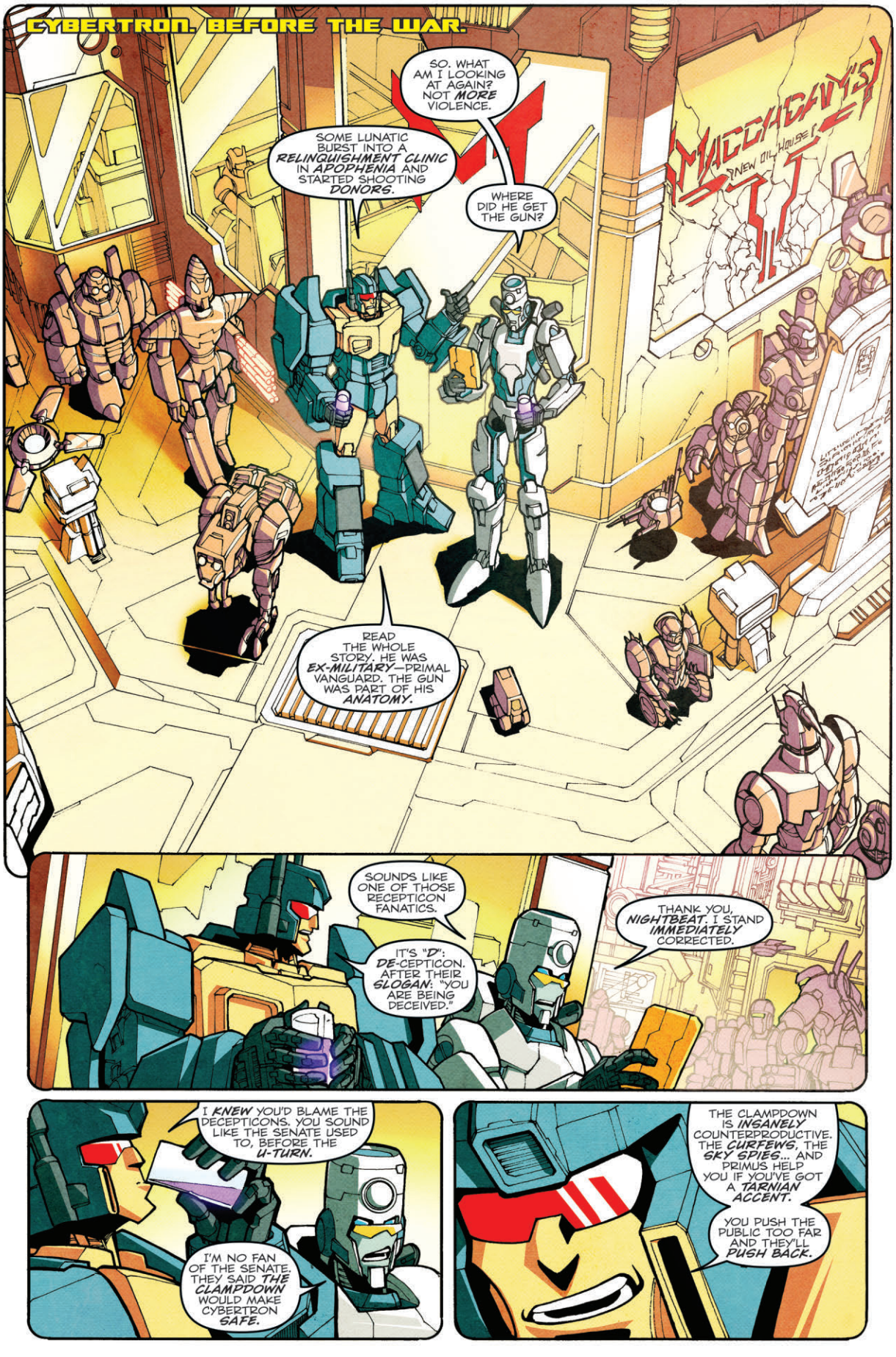
AND WHAT DID HE SAY TO THAT?
NOTHING.
HE JUST SMILED.

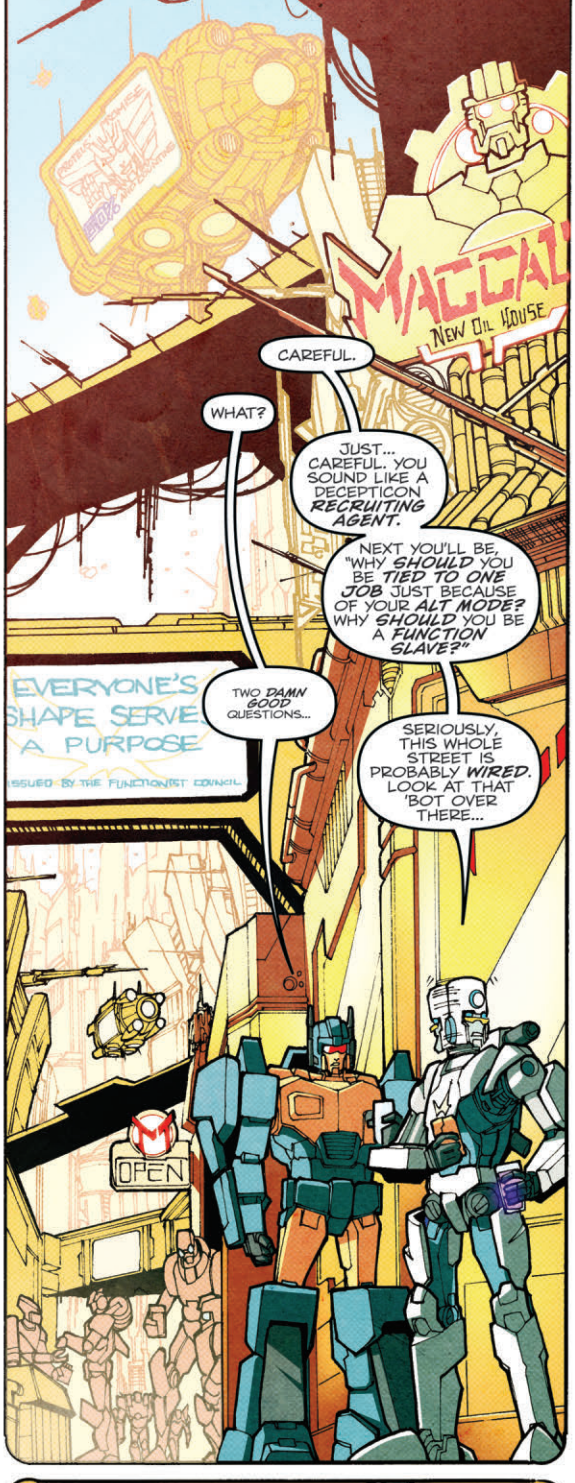
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE ANNUAL COVER B

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #9 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

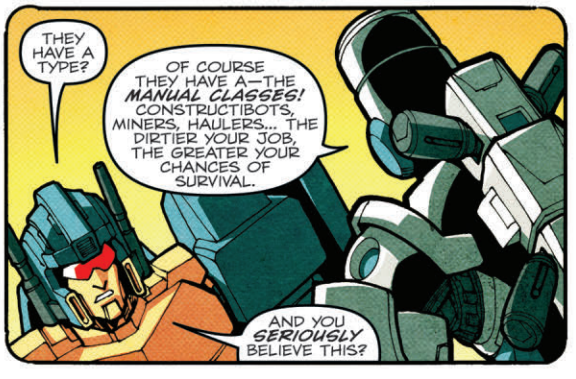

CYBERTRON. BEFORE THE WAR.
SO. WHAT AM I LOOKING AT AGAIN? NOT MORE VIOLENCE.
SOME LUNATIC BURST INTO A RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC IN APOPHENIA AND STARTED SHOOTING DONORS.
WHERE DID HE GET THE GUN?
MACCADAM'S
NEW OIL HOUSE
READ THE WHOLE STORY. HE WAS EX-MILITARY—PRIMAL VANGUARD. THE GUN WAS PART OF HIS ANATOMY.
SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF THOSE RECEPTICON FANATICS.
IT'S "D": DE-CEPTICON. AFTER THEIR SLOGAN: "YOU ARE BEING DECEIVED."
THANK YOU, NIGHTBEAT. I STAND IMMEDIATELY CORRECTED.
I KNEW YOU'D BLAME THE DECEPTICONS. YOU SOUND LIKE THE SENATE USED TO, BEFORE THE U-TURN.
I'M NO FAN OF THE SENATE. THEY SAID THE CLAMPDOWN WOULD MAKE CYBERTRON SAFE.
THE CLAMPDOWN IS INSANELY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. THE CURFEWS, THE SKY SPIES... AND PRIMUS HELP YOU IF YOU'VE GOT A TARNIAN ACCENT.
YOU PUSH THE PUBLIC TOO FAR AND THEY'LL PUSH BACK.

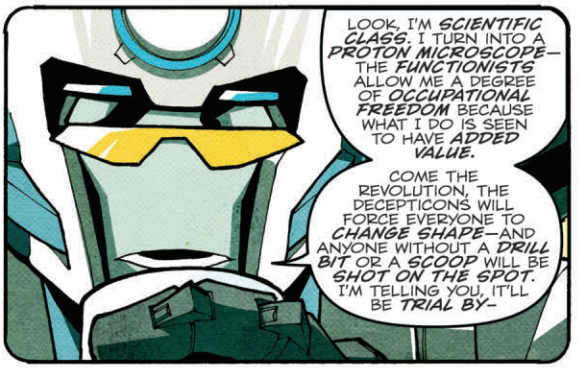

CAREFUL.
WHAT?
JUST... CAREFUL. YOU SOUND LIKE A DECEPTICON *RECRUITING AGENT.*
NEXT YOU'LL BE, "WHY *SHOULD* YOU BE *TIED TO ONE JOB* JUST BECAUSE OF YOUR *ALT MODE?* WHY *SHOULD* YOU BE A *FUNCTION SLAVE?"*
TWO *DAMN GOOD* QUESTIONS...
SERIOUSLY, THIS WHOLE STREET IS PROBABLY *WIRED.* LOOK AT THAT 'BOT OVER THERE...
MACCAD
NEW OIL HOUSE
EVERYONE'S SHAPE SERVE A PURPOSE
ISSUED BY THE FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL
OPEN

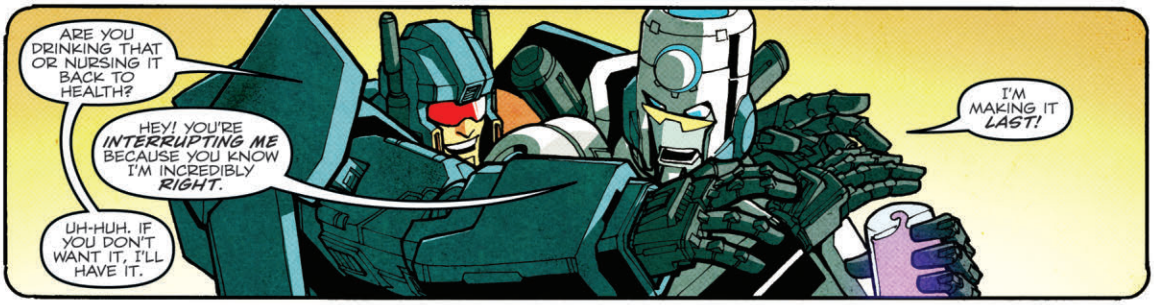
"...YOU'RE TELLING ME THOSE EYEBROWS *AREN'T* SECRET RECORDING DEVICES? THAT GUY *SCREAMS* GOVERNMENT PLANT."
"NO, *QUARK,* THAT GUY SCREAMS *LONELY.*"

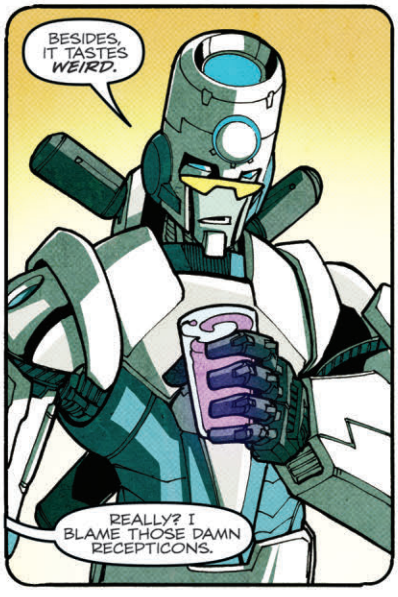
ANYWAY, *SHUT UP.*
I'M NOT ABOUT TO RUN OFF AND UPLOAD THE *DECEPTICON MANIFESTO,* SO DON'T HAVE ONE OF YOUR FREAKY FREAK OUTS.

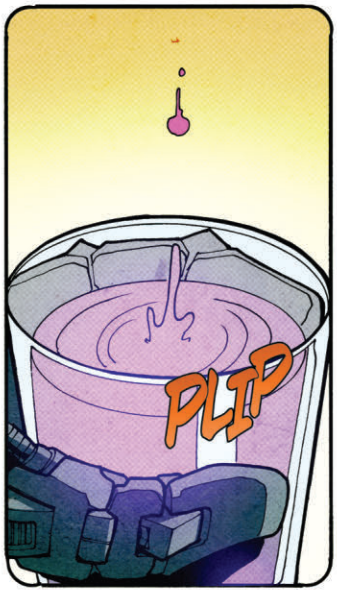
YES, WELL, WE'LL SEE WHICH OF US IS RIGHT WHEN THEY REACH THE *MAGIC NUMBER.*
WHAT, "PROTEUS'S PROMISE"? NOT GONNA HAPPEN. AND IF IT *DOES,* SO WHAT?
YOU SAY THAT *NOW*—ONCE THE DECEPTICONS TAKE OVER, WE'RE *DEAD.* WE'RE NOT THEIR *TYPE.*


THEY HAVE A TYPE?
OF COURSE THEY HAVE A—THE *MANUAL CLASSES!* CONSTRUCTIBOTS, MINERS, HAULERS... THE DIRTIER YOUR JOB, THE GREATER YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL.
AND YOU *SERIOUSLY* BELIEVE THIS?


LOOK, I'M *SCIENTIFIC CLASS.* I TURN INTO A *PROTON MICROSCOPE*—THE *FUNCTIONISTS* ALLOW ME A DEGREE OF *OCCUPATIONAL FREEDOM* BECAUSE WHAT I DO IS SEEN TO HAVE *ADDED VALUE.*
COME THE REVOLUTION, THE DECEPTICONS WILL FORCE EVERYONE TO *CHANGE SHAPE*—AND ANYONE WITHOUT A *DRILL BIT* OR A *SCOOP* WILL BE *SHOT ON THE SPOT.* I'M TELLING YOU, IT'LL BE *TRIAL BY–*


ARE YOU DRINKING THAT OR NURSING IT BACK TO HEALTH?
HEY! YOU'RE *INTERRUPTING ME* BECAUSE YOU KNOW I'M INCREDIBLY *RIGHT*.
UH-HUH. IF YOU DON'T WANT IT, I'LL HAVE IT.
I'M MAKING IT *LAST!*



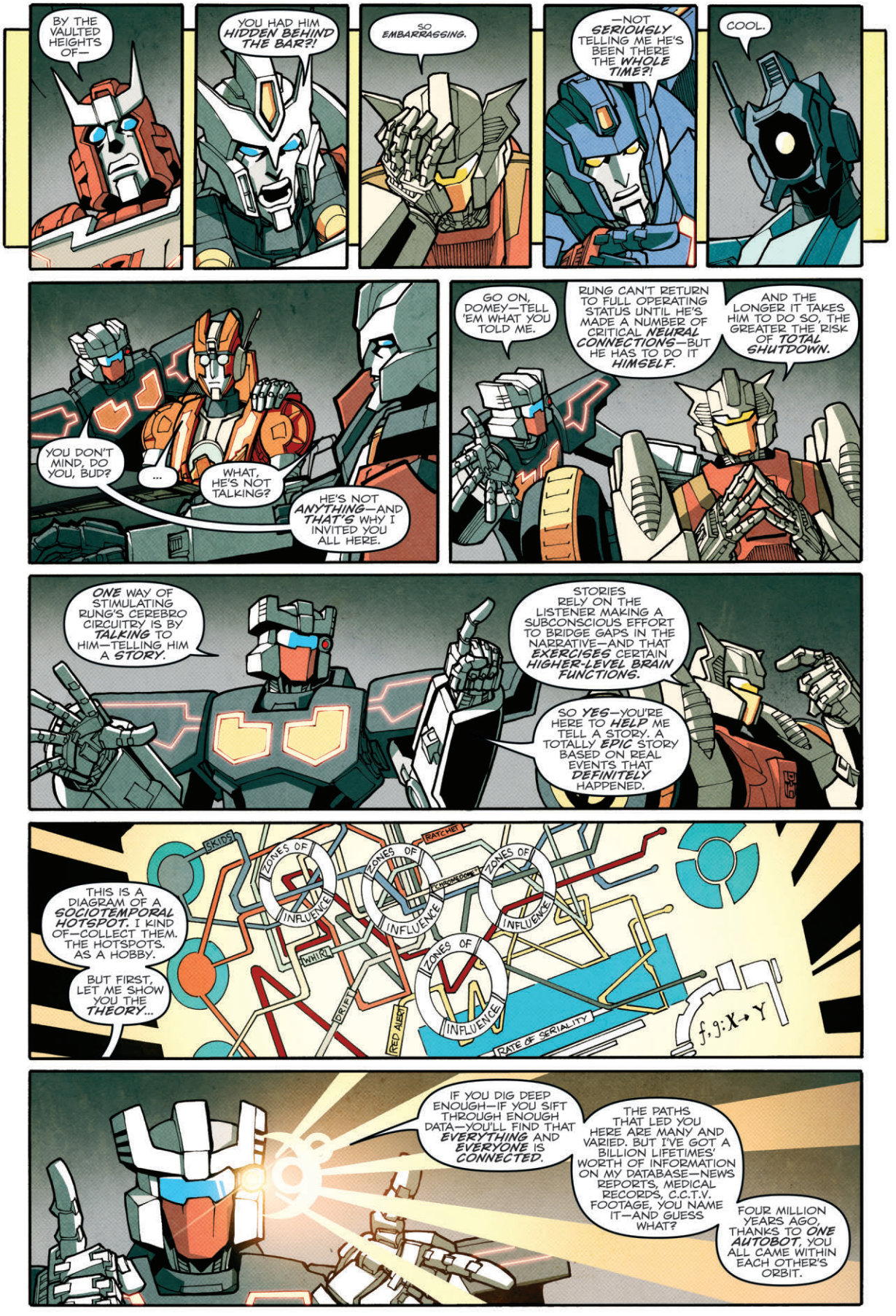


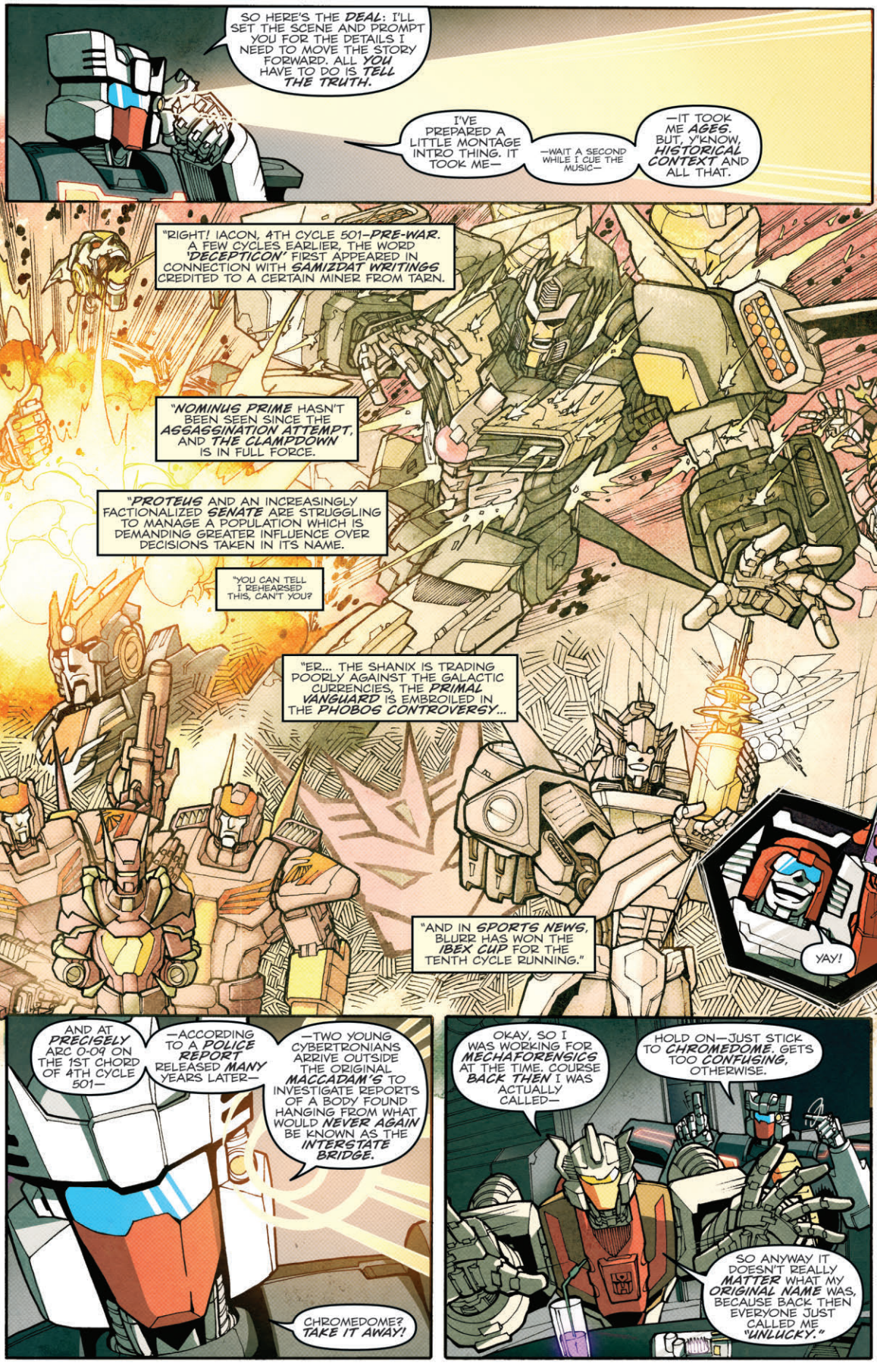
SHADOWPLAY

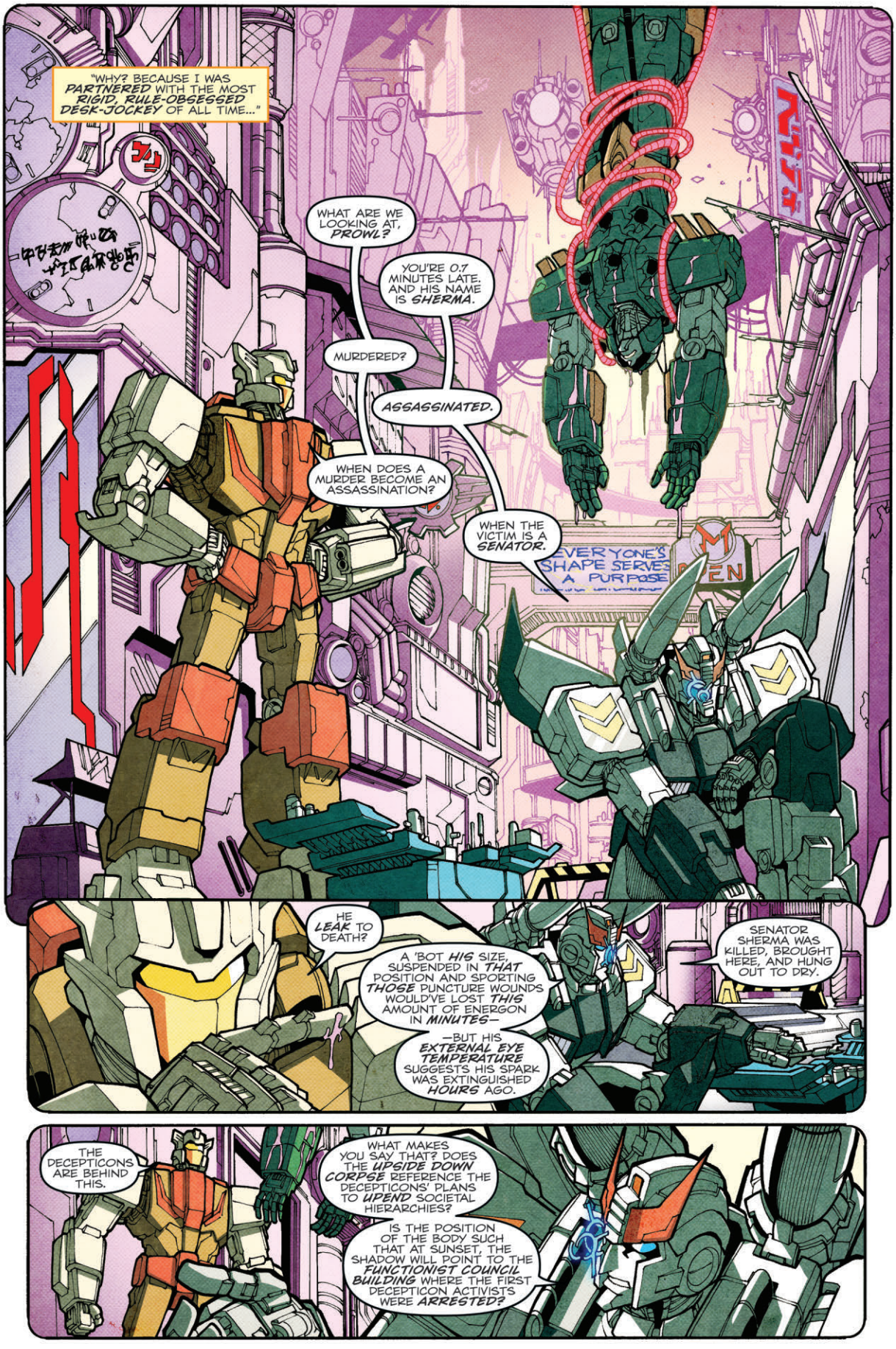
A TOTALLY EPIC STORY BASED ON REAL EVENTS THAT DEFINITELY HAPPENED

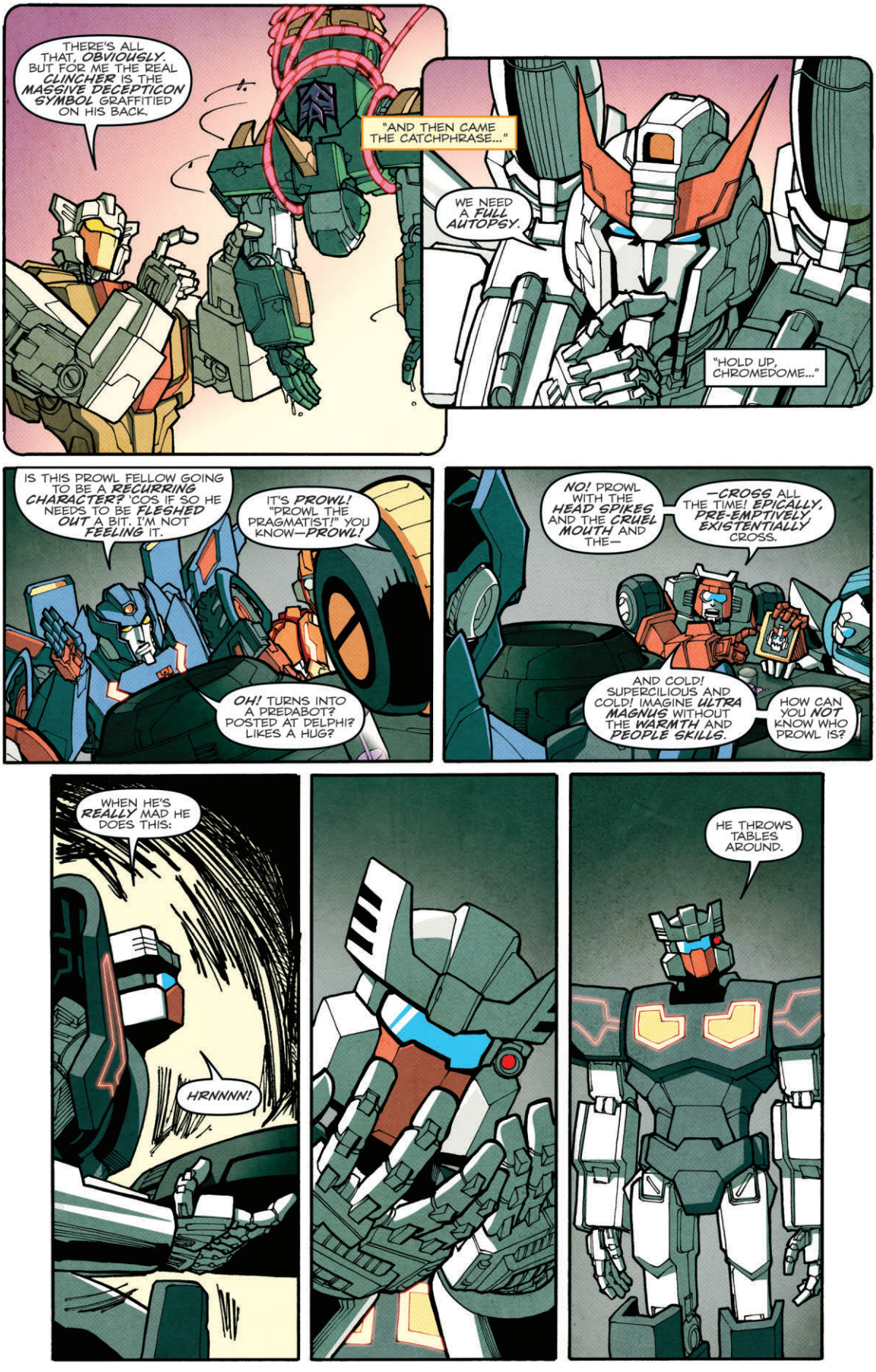
PART 1: POST HOC

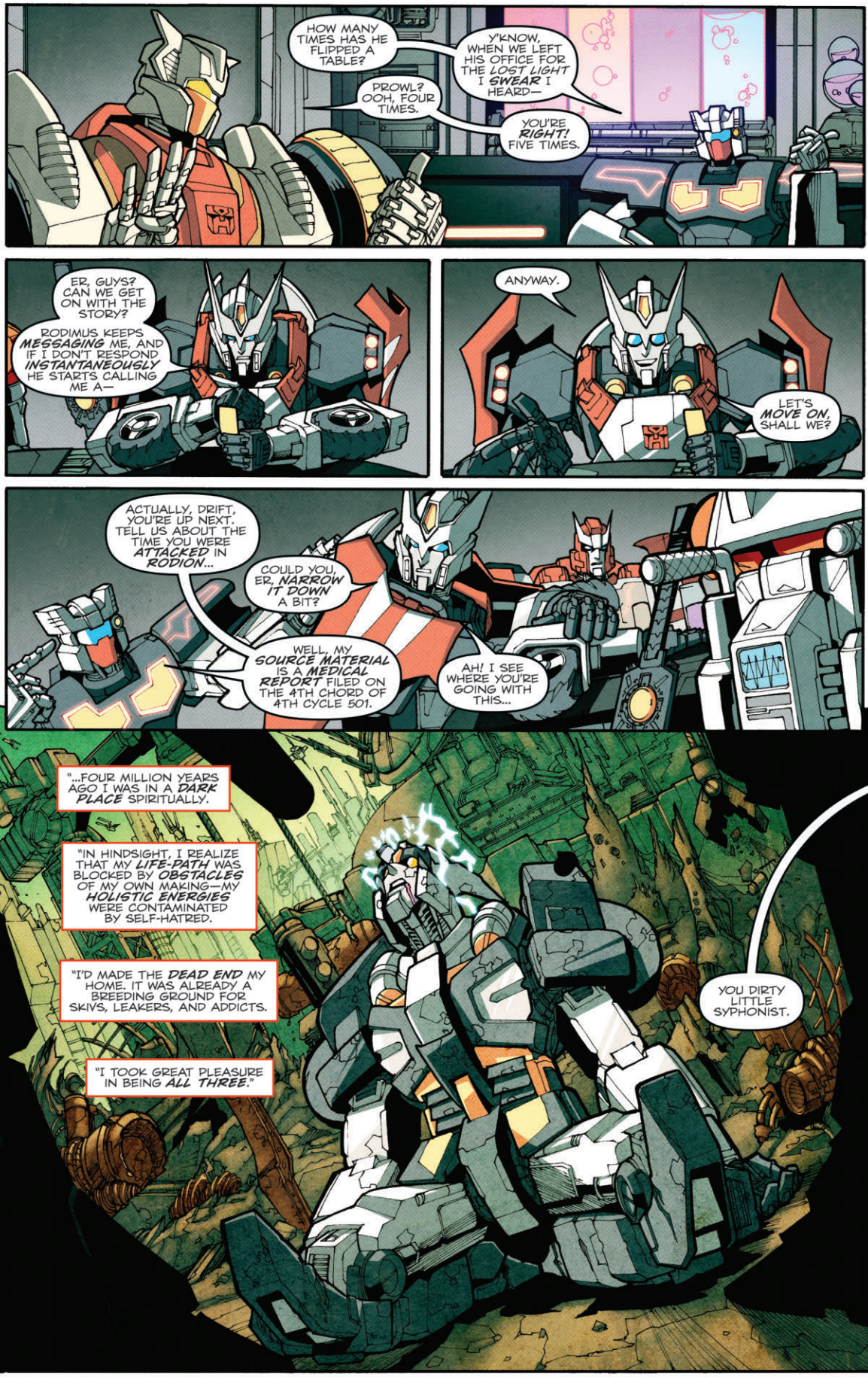
FOUR MILLION YEARS LATER...
SWERVE'S BAR.
RATCHET! YOU MADE IT!
I HOPE THIS IS IMPORTANT, REWIND. I ABANDONED A LIFE-SAVING OPERATION TO COME HERE.
THAT WAS A JOKE. DON'T ALL LAUGH AT ONCE.
I WAS ACTUALLY SPRAY-PAINTING MY HANDS.
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
YEAH, THAT WASN'T A JOKE.
HOW COME THE SIGN ON THE DOOR SAYS "CLOSED FOR REPAIRS"? RODIMUS ONLY JUST RE-OPENED THIS PLACE...
THE SIGN GIVES US SOME PRIVACY. BESIDES, IT'S TRUE! YOU SEE—
—WAIT FOR IT—
—WE'RE GONNA REPAIR RUNG'S BRAIN!

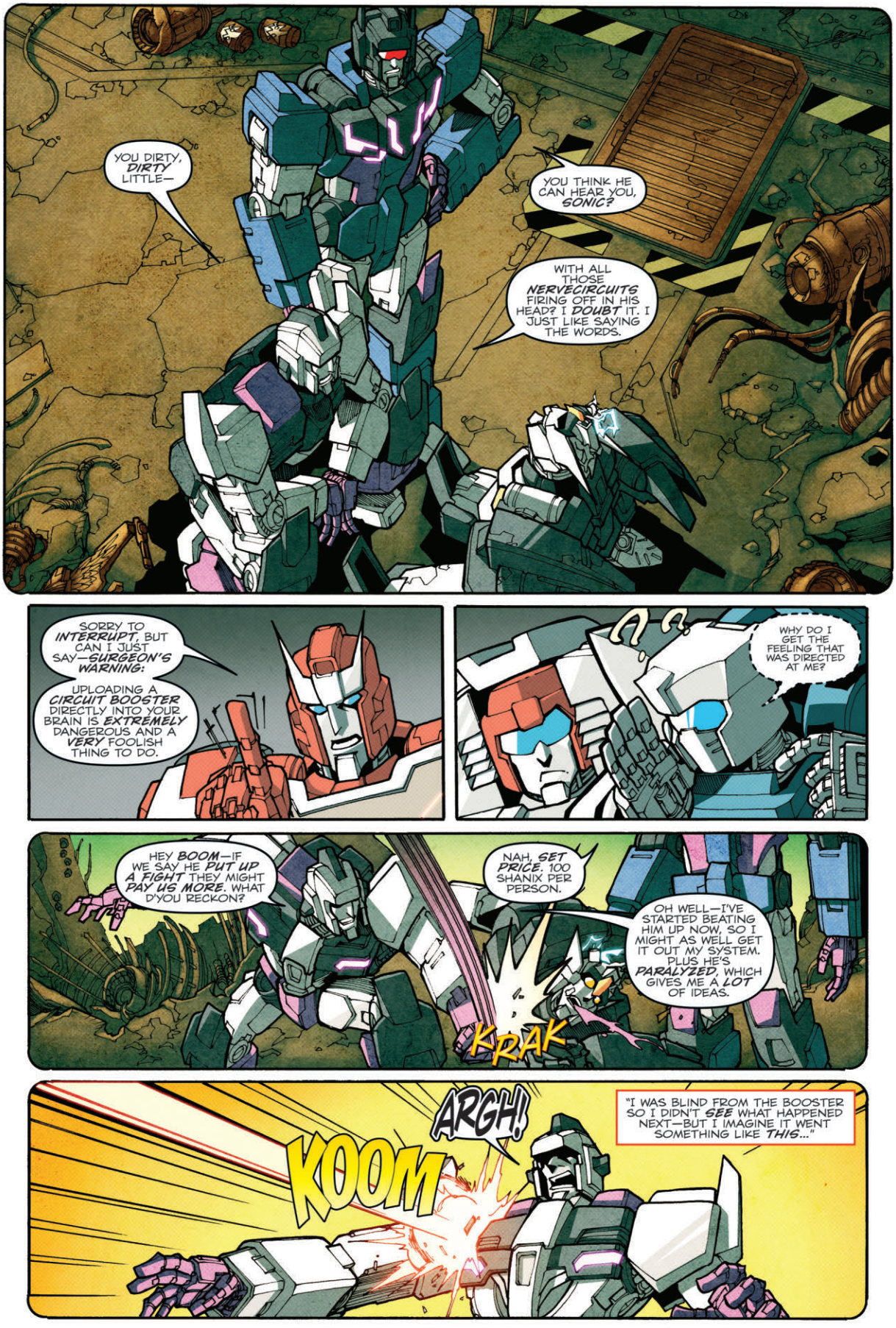

BY THE VAULTED HEIGHTS OF—
YOU HAD HIM HIDDEN BEHIND THE BAR?!
SO EMBARRASSING.
—NOT SERIOUSLY TELLING ME HE'S BEEN THERE THE WHOLE TIME?!
COOL.
YOU DON'T MIND, DO YOU, BUD?
...
WHAT, HE'S NOT TALKING?
HE'S NOT ANYTHING—AND THAT'S WHY I INVITED YOU ALL HERE.
GO ON, DOMEY—TELL 'EM WHAT YOU TOLD ME.
RUNG CAN'T RETURN TO FULL OPERATING STATUS UNTIL HE'S MADE A NUMBER OF CRITICAL NEURAL CONNECTIONS—BUT HE HAS TO DO IT HIMSELF.
AND THE LONGER IT TAKES HIM TO DO SO, THE GREATER THE RISK OF TOTAL SHUTDOWN.
ONE WAY OF STIMULATING RUNG'S CEREBRO CIRCUITRY IS BY TALKING TO HIM—TELLING HIM A STORY.
STORIES RELY ON THE LISTENER MAKING A SUBCONSCIOUS EFFORT TO BRIDGE GAPS IN THE NARRATIVE—AND THAT EXERCISES CERTAIN HIGHER-LEVEL BRAIN FUNCTIONS.
SO YES—YOU'RE HERE TO HELP ME TELL A STORY. A TOTALLY EPIC STORY BASED ON REAL EVENTS THAT DEFINITELY HAPPENED.
THIS IS A DIAGRAM OF A SOCIOTEMPORAL HOTSPOT. I KIND OF—COLLECT THEM. THE HOTSPOTS. AS A HOBBY.
BUT FIRST, LET ME SHOW YOU THE THEORY...
SKIDS
ZONES OF INFLUENCE
RATCHET
KNOCKDOWN
WHIRL
DRIFT
RED ALERT
RATE OF SERIALITY
$f, g: X \to Y$
IF YOU DIG DEEP ENOUGH—IF YOU SIFT THROUGH ENOUGH DATA—YOU'LL FIND THAT EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE IS CONNECTED.
THE PATHS THAT LED YOU HERE ARE MANY AND VARIED. BUT I'VE GOT A BILLION LIFETIMES' WORTH OF INFORMATION ON MY DATABASE—NEWS REPORTS, MEDICAL RECORDS, C.C.T.V. FOOTAGE, YOU NAME IT—AND GUESS WHAT?
FOUR MILLION YEARS AGO, THANKS TO ONE AUTOBOT, YOU ALL CAME WITHIN EACH OTHER'S ORBIT.


SO HERE'S THE DEAL: I'LL SET THE SCENE AND PROMPT YOU FOR THE DETAILS I NEED TO MOVE THE STORY FORWARD. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TELL THE TRUTH.
I'VE PREPARED A LITTLE MONTAGE INTRO THING. IT TOOK ME—
—WAIT A SECOND WHILE I CUE THE MUSIC—
—IT TOOK ME AGES. BUT, Y'KNOW, HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND ALL THAT.
"RIGHT! IACON, 4TH CYCLE 501—PRE-WAR. A FEW CYCLES EARLIER, THE WORD 'DECEPTICON' FIRST APPEARED IN CONNECTION WITH SAMIZDAT WRITINGS CREDITED TO A CERTAIN MINER FROM TARN.
"NOMINUS PRIME HASN'T BEEN SEEN SINCE THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT, AND THE CLAMPDOWN IS IN FULL FORCE.
"PROTEUS AND AN INCREASINGLY FACTIONALIZED SENATE ARE STRUGGLING TO MANAGE A POPULATION WHICH IS DEMANDING GREATER INFLUENCE OVER DECISIONS TAKEN IN ITS NAME.
"YOU CAN TELL I REHEARSED THIS, CAN'T YOU?
"ER... THE SHANIX IS TRADING POORLY AGAINST THE GALACTIC CURRENCIES, THE PRIMAL VANGUARD IS EMBROILED IN THE PHOBOS CONTROVERSY...
"AND IN SPORTS NEWS, BLURR HAS WON THE IBEX CUP FOR THE TENTH CYCLE RUNNING."
YAY!
AND AT PRECISELY ARC 0-09 ON THE 1ST CHORD OF 4TH CYCLE 501—
—ACCORDING TO A POLICE REPORT RELEASED MANY YEARS LATER—
—TWO YOUNG CYBERTRONIANS ARRIVE OUTSIDE THE ORIGINAL MACCADAM'S TO INVESTIGATE REPORTS OF A BODY FOUND HANGING FROM WHAT WOULD NEVER AGAIN BE KNOWN AS THE INTERSTATE BRIDGE.
CHROMEDOME? TAKE IT AWAY!
OKAY, SO I WAS WORKING FOR MECHAFORENSICS AT THE TIME. COURSE BACK THEN I WAS ACTUALLY CALLED—
HOLD ON—JUST STICK TO CHROMEDOME. GETS TOO CONFUSING, OTHERWISE.
SO ANYWAY IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER WHAT MY ORIGINAL NAME WAS, BECAUSE BACK THEN EVERYONE JUST CALLED ME "UNLUCKY."

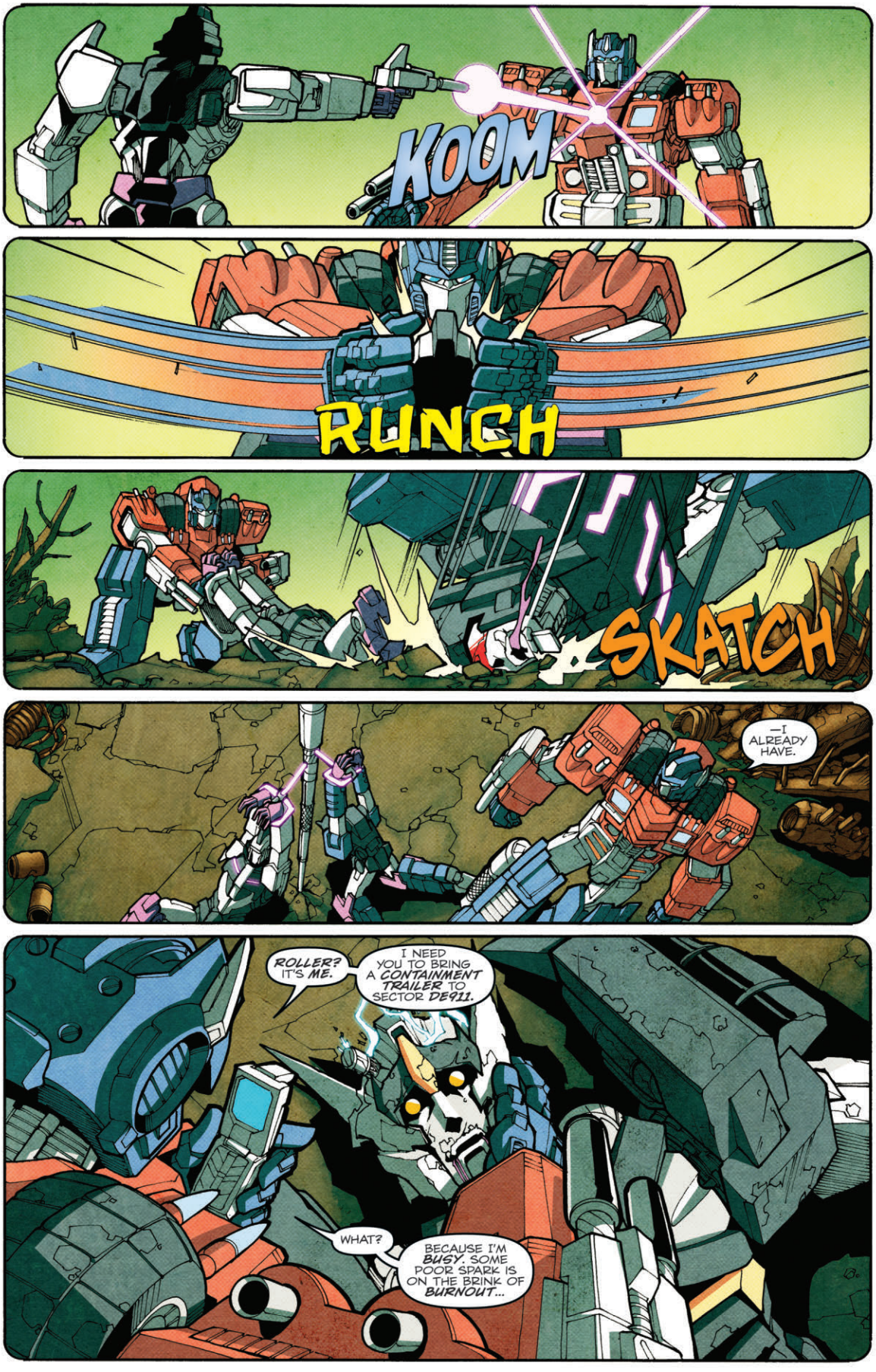

"WHY? BECAUSE I WAS PARTNERED WITH THE MOST RIGID, RULE-OBSESSED DESK-JOCKEY OF ALL TIME..."
WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT, PROWL?
YOU'RE 0.7 MINUTES LATE. AND HIS NAME IS SHERMA.
MURDERED?
ASSASSINATED.
WHEN DOES A MURDER BECOME AN ASSASSINATION?
WHEN THE VICTIM IS A SENATOR.
EVERYONE'S SHAPE SERVES A PURPOSE
HE LEAK TO DEATH?
A 'BOT HIS SIZE, SUSPENDED IN THAT POSITION AND SPORTING THOSE PUNCTURE WOUNDS WOULD'VE LOST THIS AMOUNT OF ENERGON IN MINUTES—
—BUT HIS EXTERNAL EYE TEMPERATURE SUGGESTS HIS SPARK WAS EXTINGUISHED HOURS AGO.
SENATOR SHERMA WAS KILLED, BROUGHT HERE, AND HUNG OUT TO DRY.
THE DECEPTICONS ARE BEHIND THIS.
WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT? DOES THE UPSIDE DOWN CORPSE REFERENCE THE DECEPTICONS' PLANS TO UPEND SOCIETAL HIERARCHIES?
IS THE POSITION OF THE BODY SUCH THAT AT SUNSET, THE SHADOW WILL POINT TO THE FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL BUILDING WHERE THE FIRST DECEPTICON ACTIVISTS WERE ARRESTED?

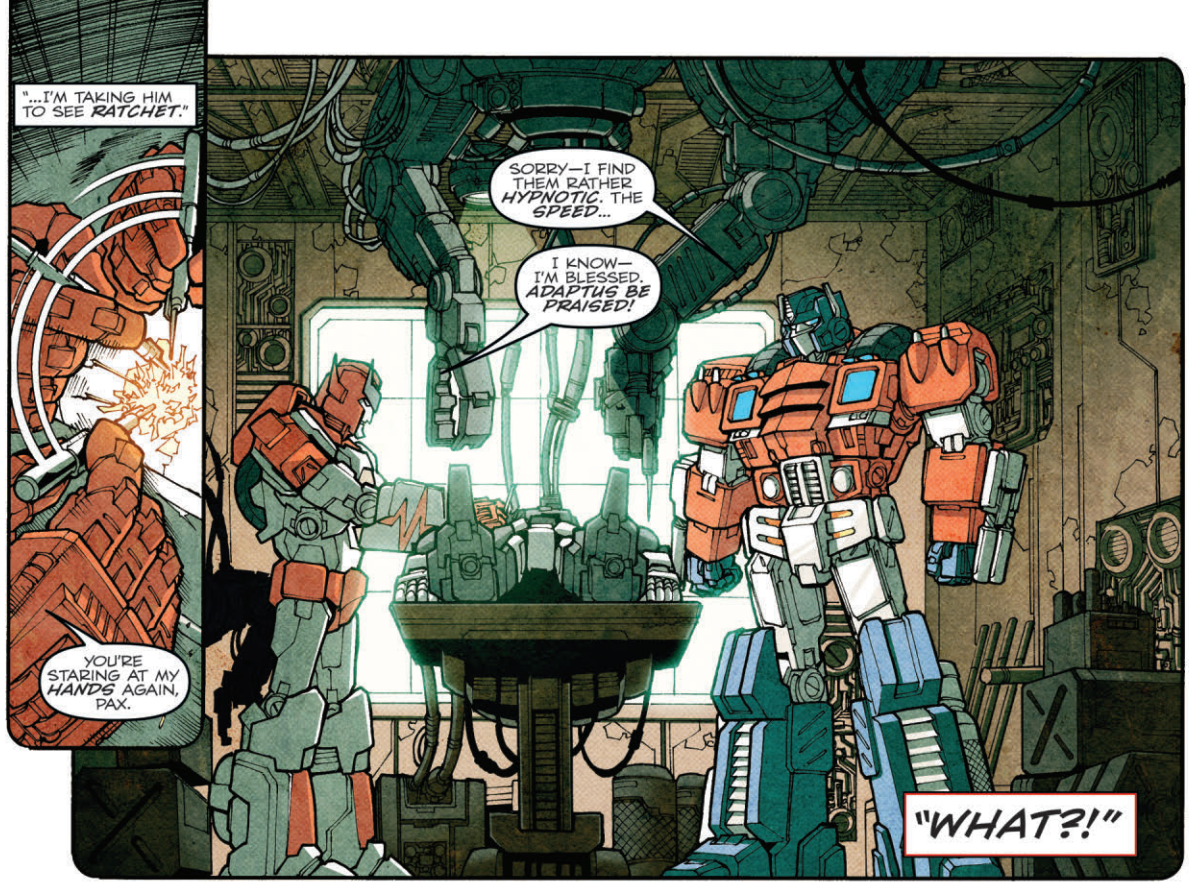

THERE'S ALL THAT, OBVIOUSLY. BUT FOR ME THE REAL CLINCHER IS THE MASSIVE DECEPTICON SYMBOL GRAFFITIED ON HIS BACK.
"AND THEN CAME THE CATCHPHRASE..."
WE NEED A FULL AUTOPSY.
"HOLD UP, CHROMEDOME..."
IS THIS PROWL FELLOW GOING TO BE A RECURRING CHARACTER? COS IF SO HE NEEDS TO BE FLESHED OUT A BIT. I'M NOT FEELING IT.
IT'S PROWL! "PROWL THE PRAGMATIST!" YOU KNOW—PROWL!
OH! TURNS INTO A PREDABOT? POSTED AT DELPHI? LIKES A HUG?
NO! PROWL WITH THE HEAD SPIKES AND THE CRUEL MOUTH AND THE—
—CROSS ALL THE TIME! EPICALLY, PRE-EMPTIVELY, EXISTENTIALLY CROSS.
AND COLD! SUPERCILIOUS AND COLD! IMAGINE ULTRA MAGNUS WITHOUT THE WARMTH AND PEOPLE SKILLS.
HOW CAN YOU NOT KNOW WHO PROWL IS?
WHEN HE'S REALLY MAD HE DOES THIS:
HRNNNN!
HE THROWS TABLES AROUND.

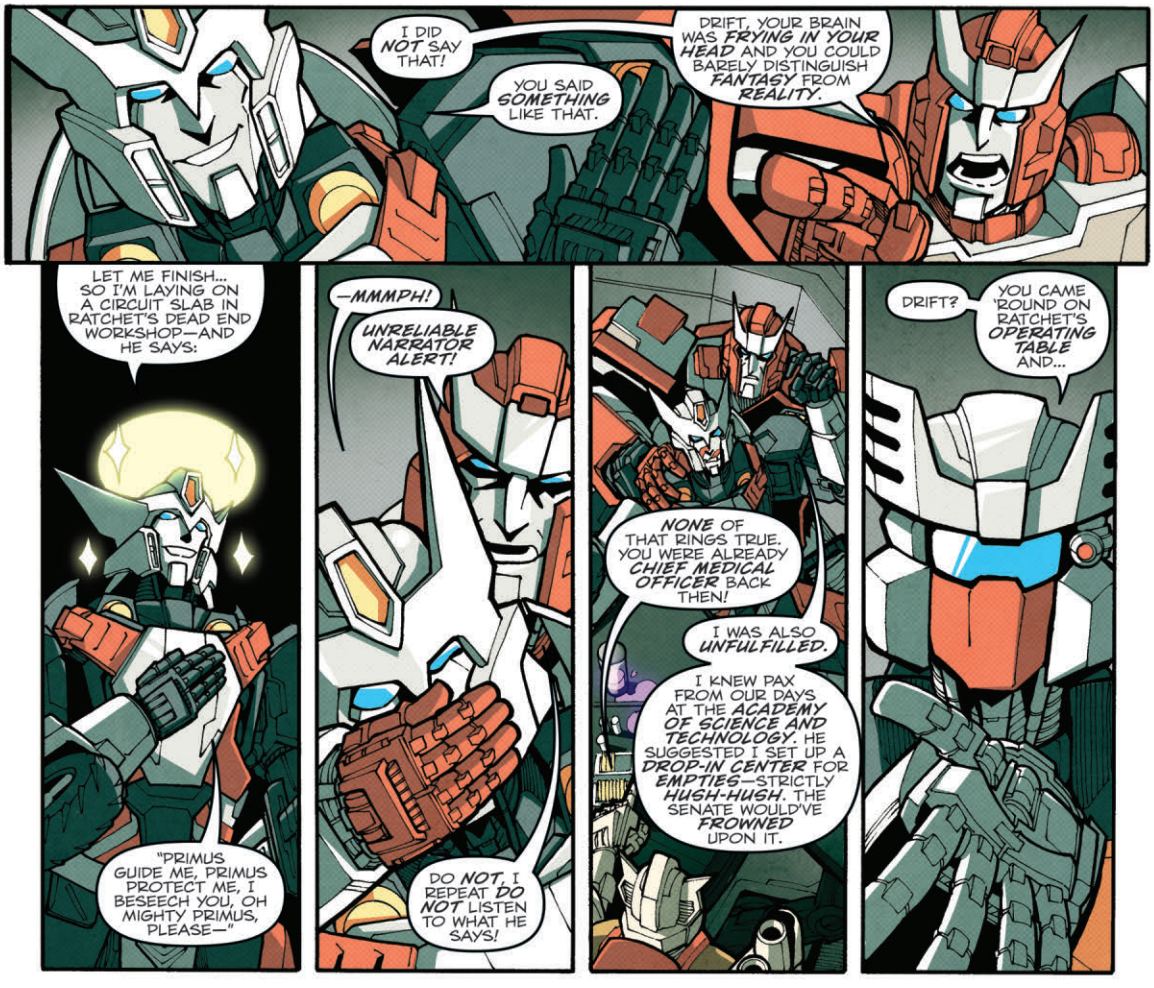

HOW MANY TIMES HAS HE FLIPPED A TABLE?
PROWL? OOH, FOUR TIMES.
Y'KNOW, WHEN WE LEFT HIS OFFICE FOR THE LOST LIGHT I SWEAR I HEARD—
YOU'RE RIGHT! FIVE TIMES.
ER, GUYS? CAN WE GET ON WITH THE STORY?
RODIMUS KEEPS MESSAGING ME, AND IF I DON'T RESPOND INSTANTANEOUSLY HE STARTS CALLING ME A—
ANYWAY.
LET'S MOVE ON, SHALL WE?
ACTUALLY, DRIFT, YOU'RE UP NEXT. TELL US ABOUT THE TIME YOU WERE ATTACKED IN RODION...
COULD YOU, ER, NARROW IT DOWN A BIT?
WELL, MY SOURCE MATERIAL IS A MEDICAL REPORT FILED ON THE 4TH CHORD OF 4TH CYCLE 501.
AH! I SEE WHERE YOU'RE GOING WITH THIS...
"...FOUR MILLION YEARS AGO I WAS IN A DARK PLACE SPIRITUALLY.
"IN HINDSIGHT, I REALIZE THAT MY LIFE-PATH WAS BLOCKED BY OBSTACLES OF MY OWN MAKING—MY HOLISTIC ENERGIES WERE CONTAMINATED BY SELF-HATRED.
"I'D MADE THE DEAD END MY HOME. IT WAS ALREADY A BREEDING GROUND FOR SKIVS, LEAKERS, AND ADDICTS.
"I TOOK GREAT PLEASURE IN BEING ALL THREE."
YOU DIRTY LITTLE SYPHONIST.

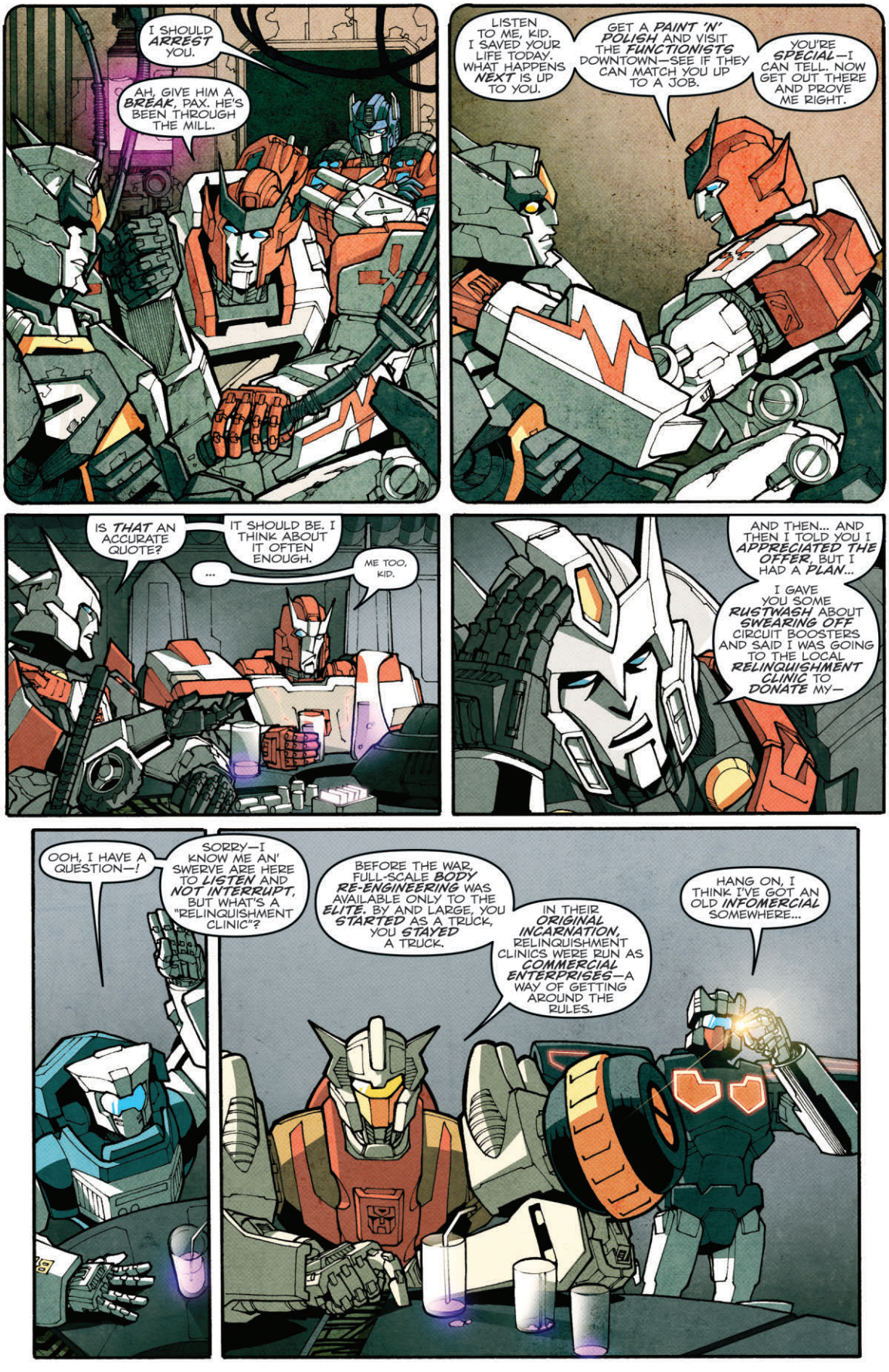

YOU DIRTY, DIRTY LITTLE—
YOU THINK HE CAN HEAR YOU, SONIC?
WITH ALL THOSE NERVECIRCUITS FIRING OFF IN HIS HEAD? I DOUBT IT. I JUST LIKE SAYING THE WORDS.
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT CAN I JUST SAY—SURGEON'S WARNING:
UPLOADING A CIRCUIT BOOSTER DIRECTLY INTO YOUR BRAIN IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS AND A VERY FOOLISH THING TO DO.
WHY DO I GET THE FEELING THAT WAS DIRECTED AT ME?
HEY BOOM—IF WE SAY HE PUT UP A FIGHT THEY MIGHT PAY US MORE. WHAT D'YOU RECKON?
NAH, SET PRICE. 100 SHANIX PER PERSON.
OH WELL—I'VE STARTED BEATING HIM UP NOW, SO I MIGHT AS WELL GET IT OUT MY SYSTEM. PLUS HE'S PARALYZED, WHICH GIVES ME A LOT OF IDEAS.
KRAK
"I WAS BLIND FROM THE BOOSTER SO I DIDN'T SEE WHAT HAPPENED NEXT—BUT I IMAGINE IT WENT SOMETHING LIKE THIS..."
ARGH!
KOOM

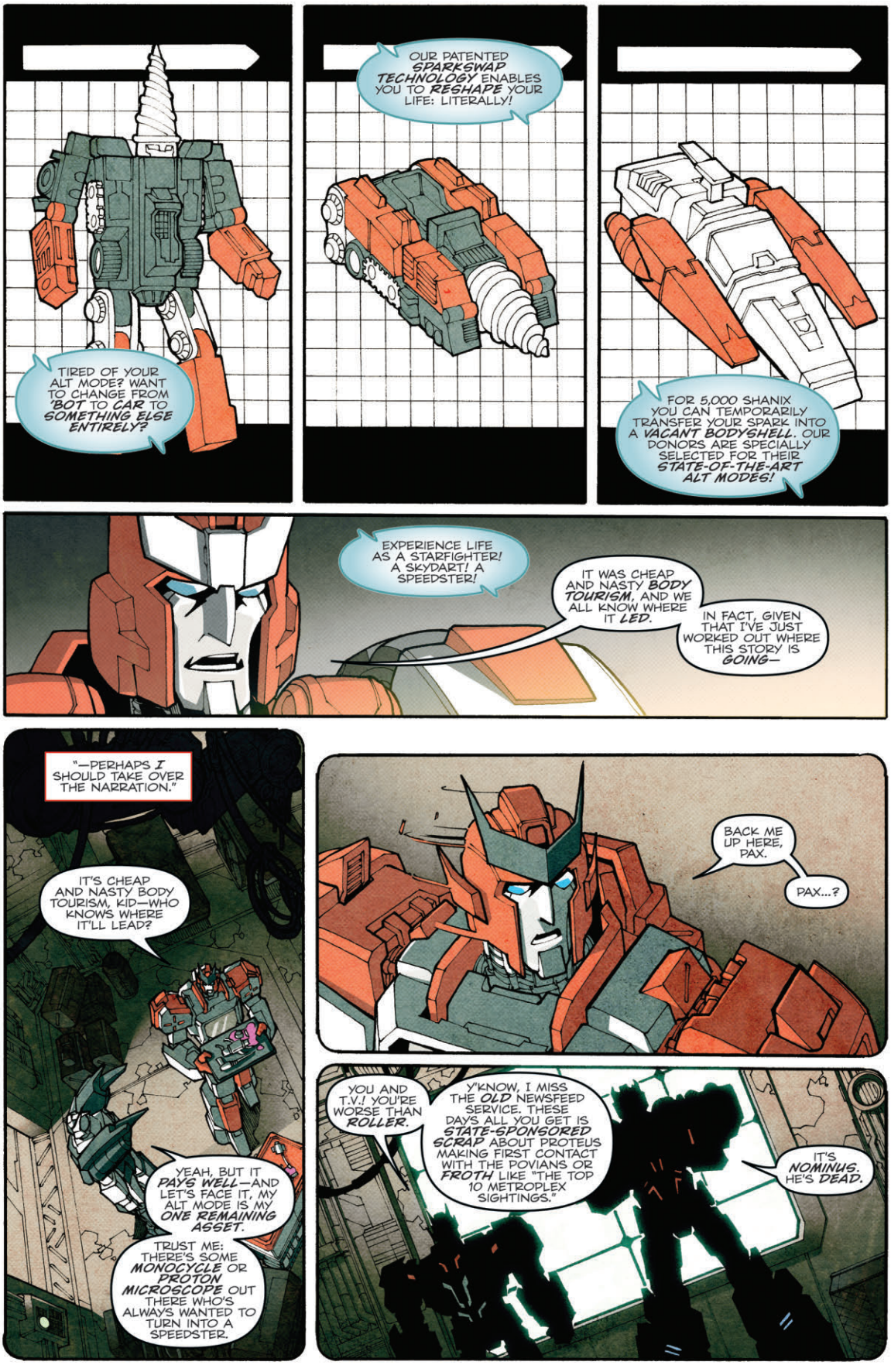
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I FIND MORE *UPSETTING*: THE CITIZEN *OVERDOSING* ON CIRCUIT BOOSTERS, OR THE TWO *THUGS* TORTURING HIM FOR THEIR OWN *DEPRAVED AMUSEMENT*.
JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU KNOW HOW *LOW* PEOPLE CAN GO...
...THEY GO *LOWER*.
LOOK WHO IT IS! IT'S *ORION PAX*—SUPERCOP!
WE'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT YOU, SUPERCOP!
WHAT YOU GONNA *DO*, SUPERCOP? *ARREST* US?
I ALREADY HAVE.
HEE HEE—
—ER... SAY *WHAT* NOW?
SHUNK
I *SAID*—
THWACK

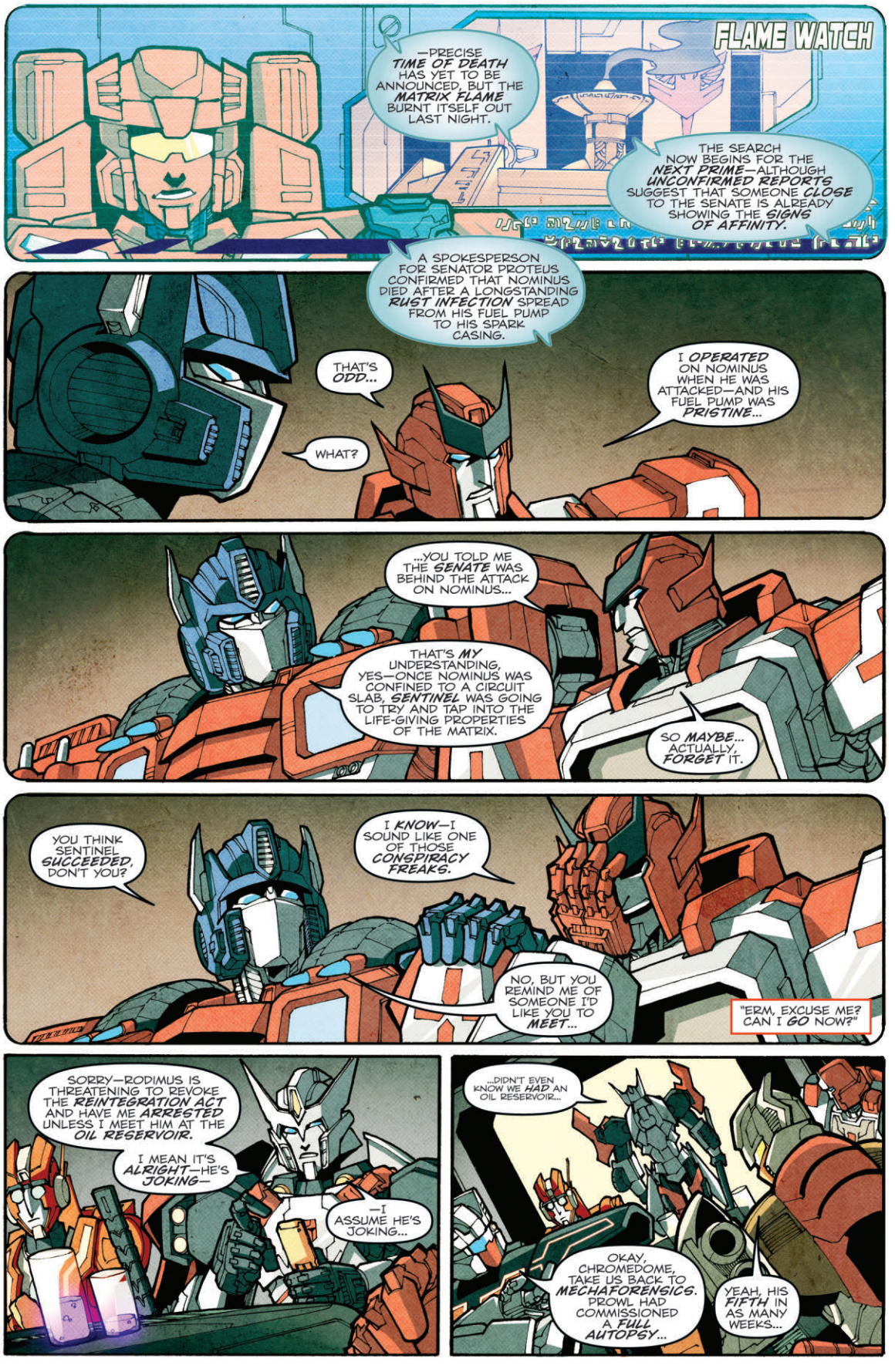

KOOM
RUNCH
SKATCH
—I ALREADY HAVE.
ROLLER? IT'S ME.
I NEED YOU TO BRING A CONTAINMENT TRAILER TO SECTOR DE911.
WHAT?
BECAUSE I'M BUSY. SOME POOR SPARK IS ON THE BRINK OF BURNOUT...

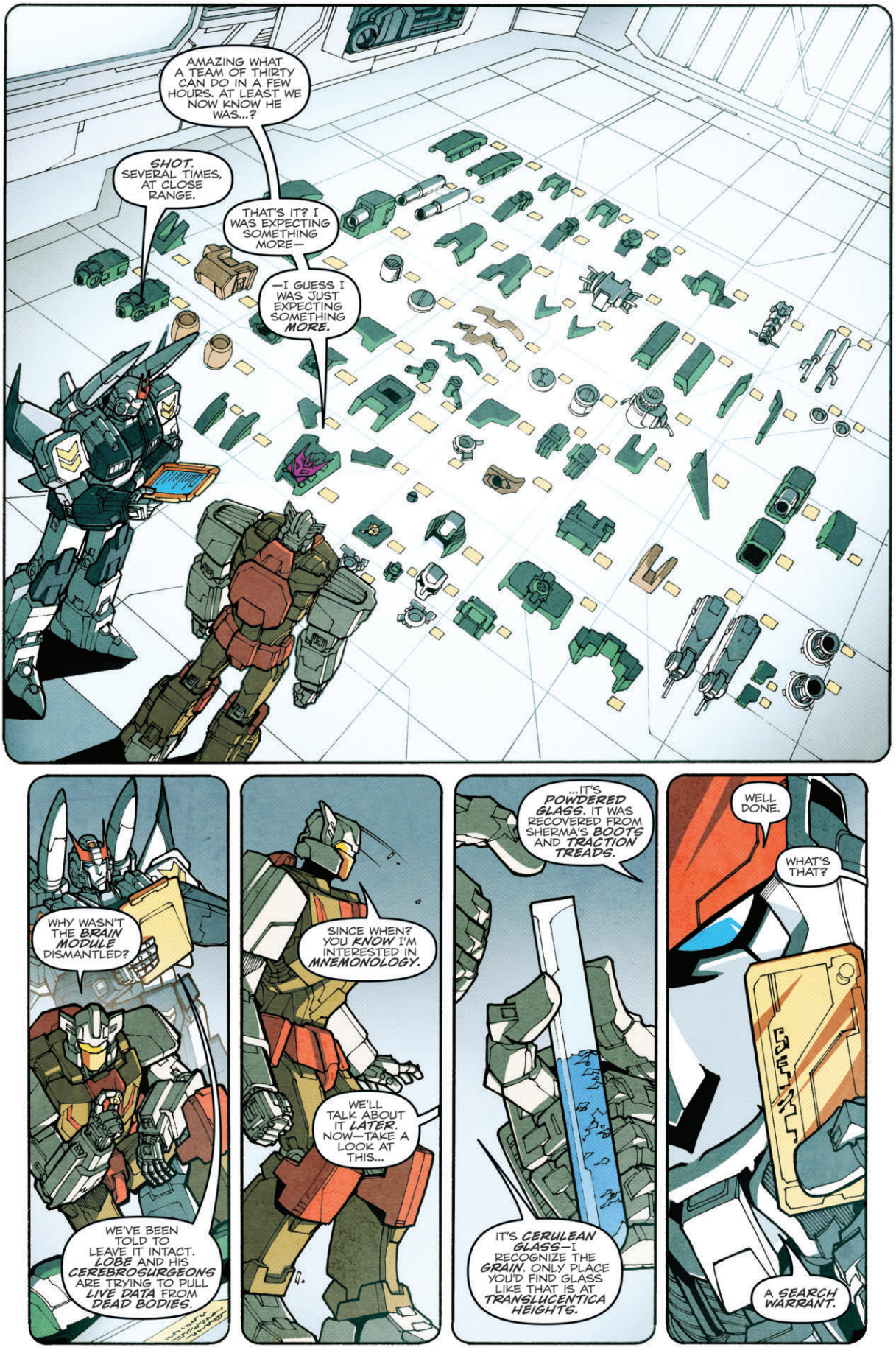

"...I'M TAKING HIM TO SEE RATCHET."
SORRY—I FIND THEM RATHER HYPNOTIC. THE SPEED...
I KNOW—I'M BLESSED. ADAPTUS BE PRAISED!
YOU'RE STARING AT MY HANDS AGAIN, PAX.
"WHAT?!"


I DID NOT SAY THAT!
YOU SAID SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
DRIFT, YOUR BRAIN WAS FRYING IN YOUR HEAD AND YOU COULD BARELY DISTINGUISH FANTASY FROM REALITY.
LET ME FINISH... SO I'M LAYING ON A CIRCUIT SLAB IN RATCHET'S DEAD END WORKSHOP—AND HE SAYS:
"PRIMUS GUIDE ME, PRIMUS PROTECT ME, I BESEECH YOU, OH MIGHTY PRIMUS, PLEASE—"
—MMMPH!
UNRELIABLE NARRATOR ALERT!
DO NOT, I REPEAT DO NOT LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAYS!
NONE OF THAT RINGS TRUE. YOU WERE ALREADY CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER BACK THEN!
I WAS ALSO UNFULFILLED.
I KNEW PAX FROM OUR DAYS AT THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. HE SUGGESTED I SET UP A DROP-IN CENTER FOR EMPTIES—STRICTLY HUSH-HUSH. THE SENATE WOULD'VE FROWNED UPON IT.
DRIFT?
YOU CAME 'ROUND ON RATCHET'S OPERATING TABLE AND...

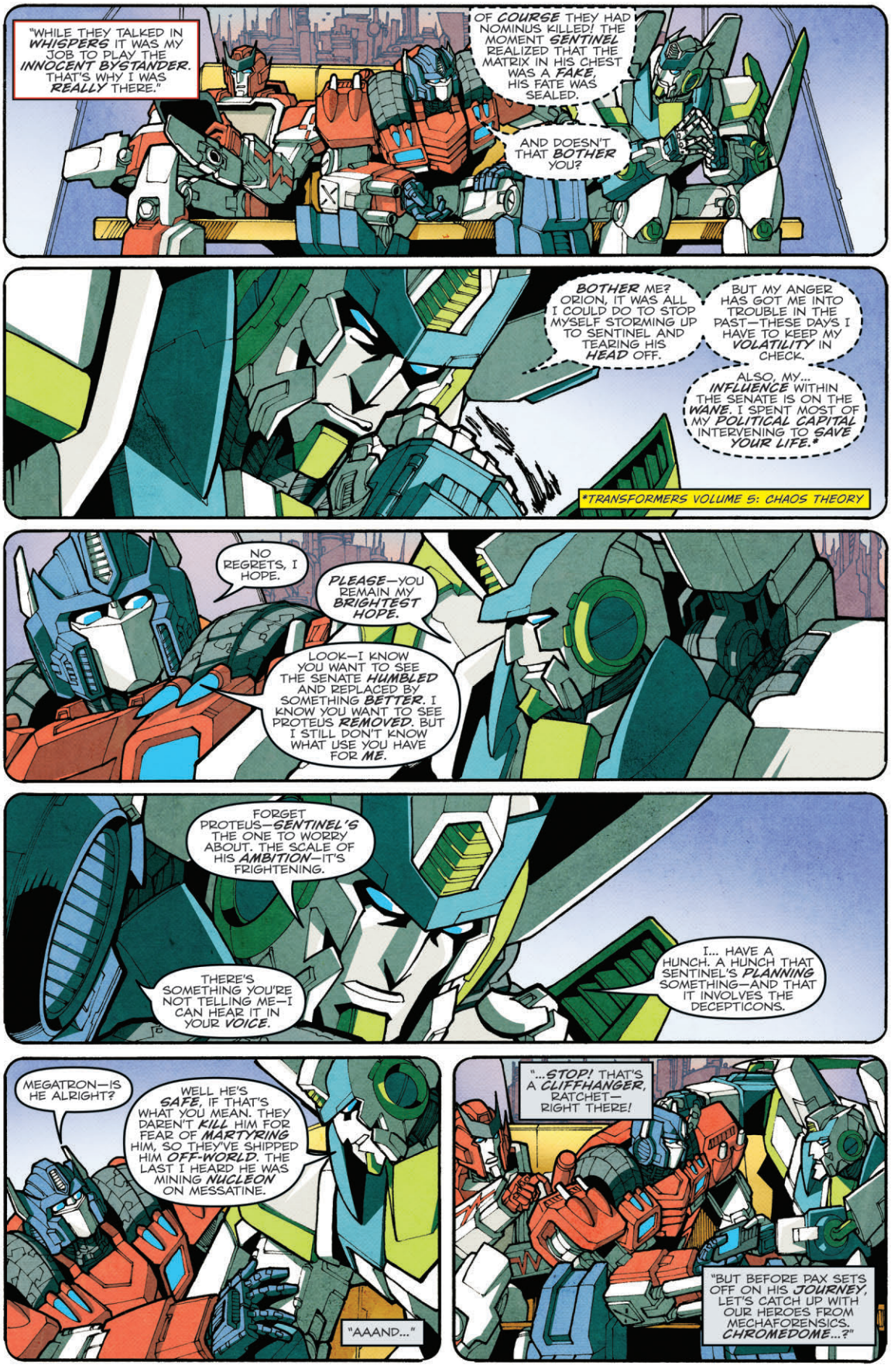

I SHOULD ARREST YOU.
AH, GIVE HIM A BREAK, PAX. HE'S BEEN THROUGH THE MILL.
LISTEN TO ME, KID. I SAVED YOUR LIFE TODAY. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS UP TO YOU.
GET A PAINT 'N' POLISH AND VISIT THE FUNCTIONISTS DOWNTOWN—SEE IF THEY CAN MATCH YOU UP TO A JOB.
YOU'RE SPECIAL—I CAN TELL. NOW GET OUT THERE AND PROVE ME RIGHT.
IS THAT AN ACCURATE QUOTE?
IT SHOULD BE. I THINK ABOUT IT OFTEN ENOUGH.
...
ME TOO, KID.
AND THEN... AND THEN I TOLD YOU I APPRECIATED THE OFFER, BUT I HAD A PLAN...
I GAVE YOU SOME RUSTWASH ABOUT SWEARING OFF CIRCUIT BOOSTERS AND SAID I WAS GOING TO THE LOCAL RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC TO DONATE MY—
OOH, I HAVE A QUESTION—!
SORRY—I KNOW ME AN' SWERVE ARE HERE TO LISTEN AND NOT INTERRUPT, BUT WHAT'S A "RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC"?
BEFORE THE WAR, FULL-SCALE BODY RE-ENGINEERING WAS AVAILABLE ONLY TO THE ELITE. BY AND LARGE, YOU STARTED AS A TRUCK, YOU STAYED A TRUCK.
IN THEIR ORIGINAL INCARNATION, RELINQUISHMENT CLINICS WERE RUN AS COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES—A WAY OF GETTING AROUND THE RULES.
HANG ON, I THINK I'VE GOT AN OLD INFOMERCIAL SOMEWHERE...

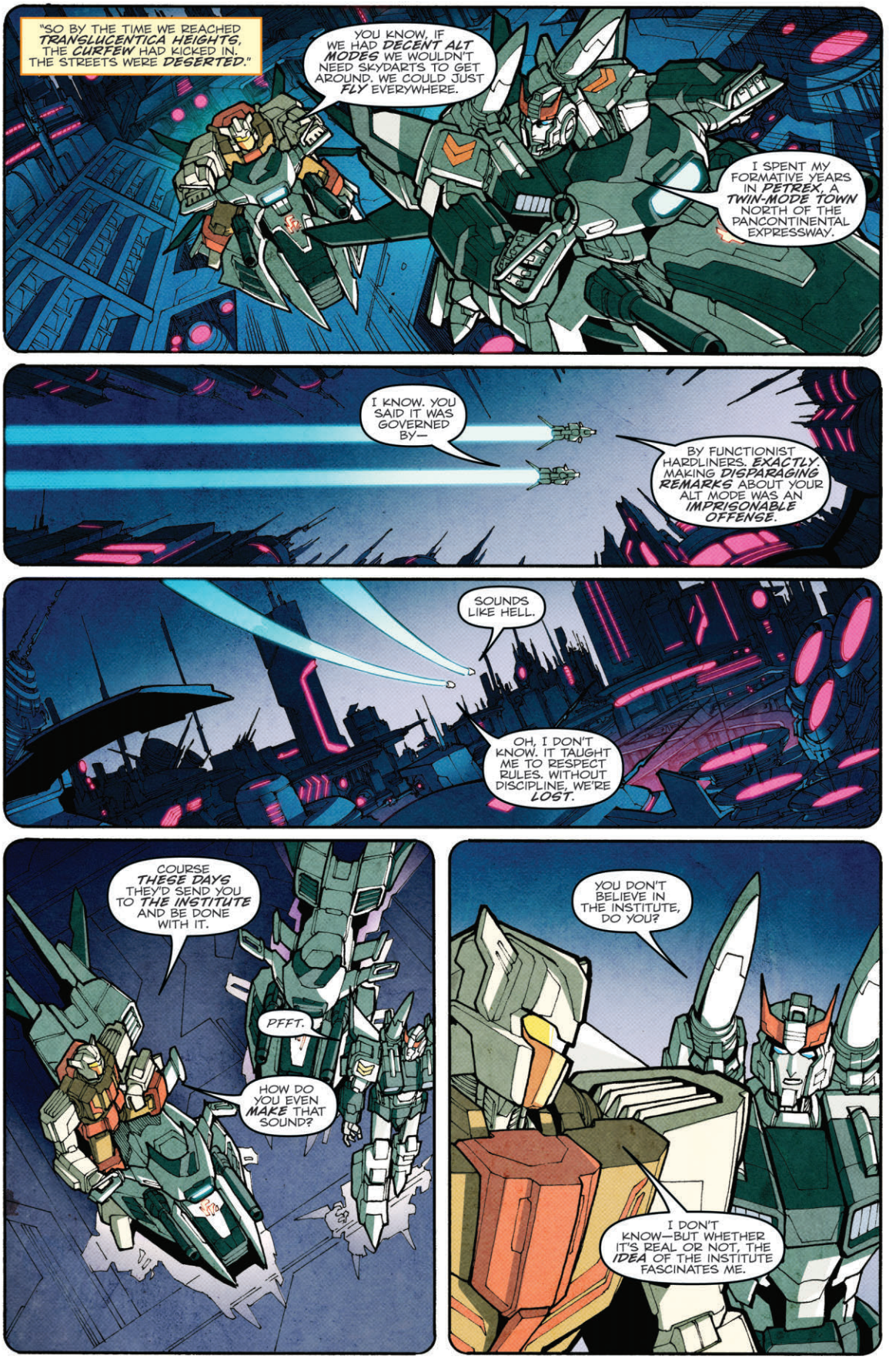

TIRED OF YOUR ALT MODE? WANT TO CHANGE FROM *'BOT* TO *CAR* TO *SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY?*
OUR PATENTED *SPARKSWAP TECHNOLOGY* ENABLES YOU TO *RESHAPE* YOUR LIFE: LITERALLY!
FOR 5,000 SHANIX YOU CAN TEMPORARILY TRANSFER YOUR SPARK INTO A *VACANT BODYSHELL*. OUR DONORS ARE SPECIALLY SELECTED FOR THEIR *STATE-OF-THE-ART ALT MODES!*
EXPERIENCE LIFE AS A STARFIGHTER! A SKYDART! A SPEEDSTER!
IT WAS CHEAP AND NASTY *BODY TOURISM*, AND WE ALL KNOW WHERE IT *LED*.
IN FACT, GIVEN THAT I'VE JUST WORKED OUT WHERE THIS STORY IS *GOING*—
"—PERHAPS *I* SHOULD TAKE OVER THE NARRATION."
IT'S CHEAP AND NASTY BODY TOURISM, KID—WHO KNOWS WHERE IT'LL LEAD?
YEAH, BUT IT *PAYS WELL*—AND LET'S FACE IT, MY ALT MODE IS MY *ONE REMAINING ASSET*.
TRUST ME: THERE'S SOME *MONOCYCLE* OR *PROTON MICROSCOPE* OUT THERE WHO'S ALWAYS WANTED TO TURN INTO A SPEEDSTER.
BACK ME UP HERE, PAX.
PAX...?
YOU AND T.V.! YOU'RE WORSE THAN *ROLLER*.
Y'KNOW, I MISS THE *OLD* NEWSFEED SERVICE. THESE DAYS ALL YOU GET IS *STATE-SPONSORED SCRAP* ABOUT PROTEUS MAKING FIRST CONTACT WITH THE POVIANS OR *FROTH* LIKE "THE TOP 10 METROPLEX SIGHTINGS."
IT'S *NOMINUS*. HE'S *DEAD*.

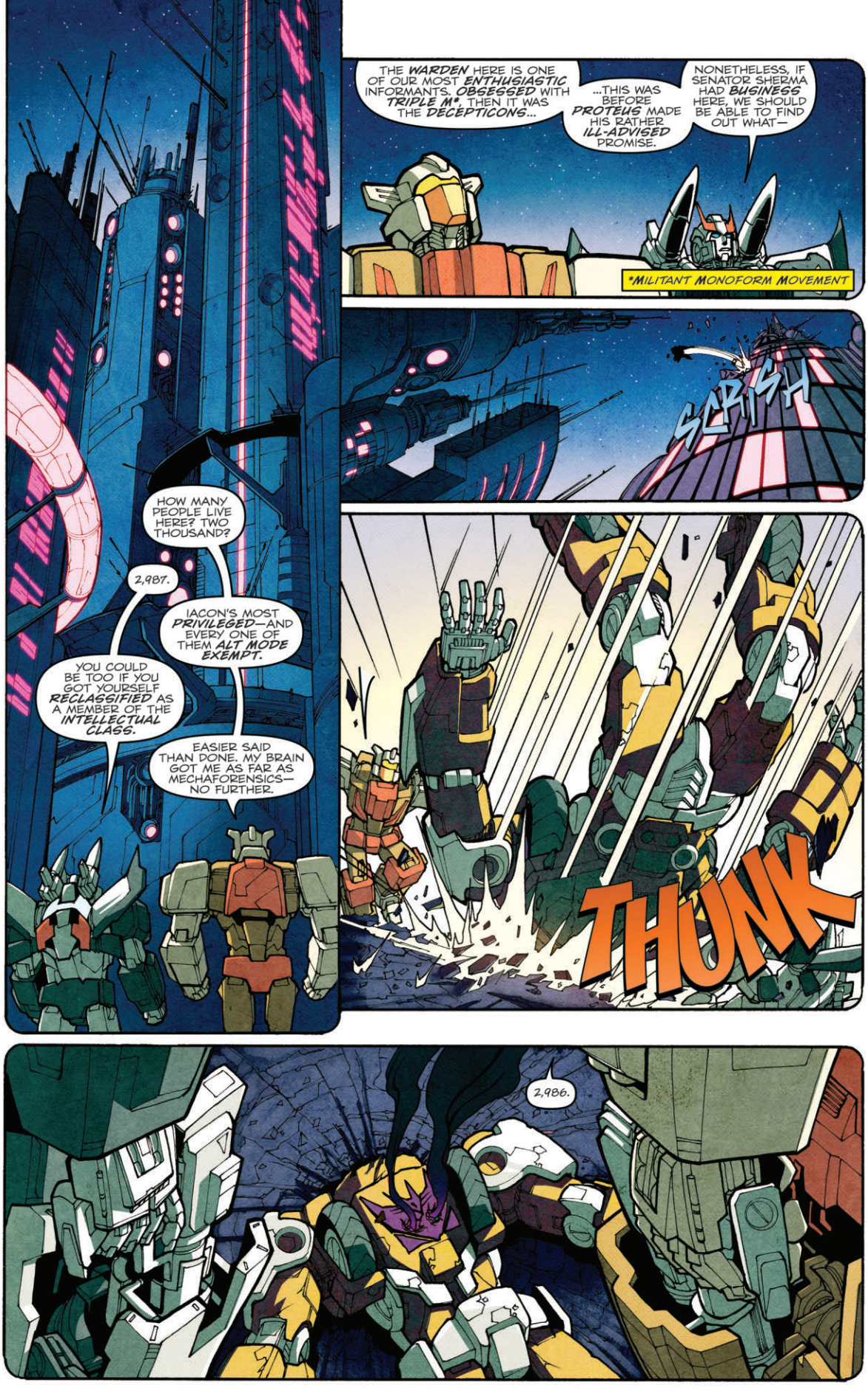

FLAME WATCH
—PRECISE TIME OF DEATH HAS YET TO BE ANNOUNCED, BUT THE MATRIX FLAME BURNT ITSELF OUT LAST NIGHT.
THE SEARCH NOW BEGINS FOR THE NEXT PRIME—ALTHOUGH UNCONFIRMED REPORTS SUGGEST THAT SOMEONE CLOSE TO THE SENATE IS ALREADY SHOWING THE SIGNS OF AFFINITY.
A SPOKESPERSON FOR SENATOR PROTEUS CONFIRMED THAT NOMINUS DIED AFTER A LONGSTANDING RUST INFECTION SPREAD FROM HIS FUEL PUMP TO HIS SPARK CASING.
THAT'S ODD...
WHAT?
I OPERATED ON NOMINUS WHEN HE WAS ATTACKED—AND HIS FUEL PUMP WAS PRISTINE...
...YOU TOLD ME THE SENATE WAS BEHIND THE ATTACK ON NOMINUS...
THAT'S MY UNDERSTANDING. YES—ONCE NOMINUS WAS CONFINED TO A CIRCUIT SLAB, SENTINEL WAS GOING TO TRY AND TAP INTO THE LIFE-GIVING PROPERTIES OF THE MATRIX.
SO MAYBE... ACTUALLY, FORGET IT.
YOU THINK SENTINEL SUCCEEDED, DON'T YOU?
I KNOW—I SOUND LIKE ONE OF THOSE CONSPIRACY FREAKS.
NO, BUT YOU REMIND ME OF SOMEONE I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET...
"ERM, EXCUSE ME? CAN I GO NOW?"
SORRY—RODIMUS IS THREATENING TO REVOKE THE REINTEGRATION ACT AND HAVE ME ARRESTED UNLESS I MEET HIM AT THE OIL REGERVOIR.
I MEAN IT'S ALRIGHT—HE'S JOKING—
—I ASSUME HE'S JOKING...
...DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WE HAD AN OIL RESERVOIR...
OKAY, CHROMEDOME, TAKE US BACK TO MECHAFORENSICS. PROWL HAD COMMISSIONED A FULL AUTOPSY...
YEAH, HIS FIFTH IN AS MANY WEEKS...


AMAZING WHAT A TEAM OF THIRTY CAN DO IN A FEW HOURS. AT LEAST WE NOW KNOW HE WAS...?
SHOT. SEVERAL TIMES, AT CLOSE RANGE.
THAT'S IT? I WAS EXPECTING SOMETHING MORE—
—I GUESS I WAS JUST EXPECTING SOMETHING MORE.
WHY WASN'T THE BRAIN MODULE DISMANTLED?
WE'VE BEEN TOLD TO LEAVE IT INTACT. LOBE AND HIS CEREBROSURGEONS ARE TRYING TO PULL LIVE DATA FROM DEAD BODIES.
SINCE WHEN? YOU KNOW I'M INTERESTED IN MNEMONOLOGY.
WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER. NOW—TAKE A LOOK AT THIS...
...IT'S POWDERED GLASS. IT WAS RECOVERED FROM SHERMA'S BOOTS AND TRACTION TREADS.
IT'S CERULEAN GLASS—I RECOGNIZE THE GRAIN. ONLY PLACE YOU'D FIND GLASS LIKE THAT IS AT TRANSLUCENTICA HEIGHTS.
WELL DONE.
WHAT'S THAT?
A SEARCH WARRANT.

"MEANWHILE, ACROSS TOWN—ACCORDING TO NINE MINUTES OF RECENTLY-AUTHENTICATED C.C.T.V. FOOTAGE—RATCHET AND ORION PAX WERE STANDING IN THE SHADOW OF THE ARK-1 MEMORIAL STATUE.
"RATCHET...?"
"I THINK ONLY ROLLER AND I KNEW THAT PAX HAD A CONTACT WITHIN THE SENATE.
"ROLLER USED TO TEASE HIM ABOUT IT: 'HE'S STRINGING YOU ALONG, ORION! YOU'RE HIS GO-TO 'BOT WHEN HE WANTS TO SHOW OFF, AND YOU LOVE IT.'
"TYPICAL ROLLER.
"ANYWAY, THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME PAX HAD ASKED ME TO ACCOMPANY HIM TO ONE OF HIS RENDEZVOUS.
"HE SAID HE JUST WANTED THE COMPANY."
UNTIL THEIR SAFE RETU
GALVATRON OF PROTOHEX
STRAXUS OF YUSS
HIAXUS OF TESARUS MINOR
HEROES, ONE AND ALL...
...I'VE LOST COUNT OF THE MILLIONS I'VE SPENT ON SEARCH MISSIONS.
I HEAR YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN EXPLORATION.
AND RETRIEVAL, YES. I LIKE TO FIND THINGS THAT ARE LOST. LUNA 1 IS ANOTHER OBSESSION.
I THINK YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER.
ONLY BY SIGHT.
THIS IS RATCHET. I TRUST HIM.
THEN SO DO I.


"WHILE THEY TALKED IN WHISPERS IT WAS MY JOB TO PLAY THE INNOCENT BYSTANDER. THAT'S WHY I WAS REALLY THERE."
OF COURSE THEY HAD NOMINUS KILLED! THE MOMENT SENTINEL REALIZED THAT THE MATRIX IN HIS CHEST WAS A FAKE, HIS FATE WAS SEALED.
AND DOESN'T THAT BOTHER YOU?
BOTHER ME? ORION, IT WAS ALL I COULD DO TO STOP MYSELF STORMING UP TO SENTINEL AND TEARING HIS HEAD OFF.
BUT MY ANGER HAS GOT ME INTO TROUBLE IN THE PAST—THESE DAYS I HAVE TO KEEP MY VOLATILITY IN CHECK.
ALSO, MY... INFLUENCE WITHIN THE SENATE IS ON THE WANE. I SPENT MOST OF MY POLITICAL CAPITAL INTERVENING TO SAVE YOUR LIFE.*
*TRANSFORMERS VOLUME 5: CHAOS THEORY
NO REGRETS, I HOPE.
PLEASE—YOU REMAIN MY BRIGHTEST HOPE.
LOOK—I KNOW YOU WANT TO SEE THE SENATE HUMBLED AND REPLACED BY SOMETHING BETTER. I KNOW YOU WANT TO SEE PROTEUS REMOVED. BUT I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT USE YOU HAVE FOR ME.
FORGET PROTEUS—SENTINEL'S THE ONE TO WORRY ABOUT. THE SCALE OF HIS AMBITION—IT'S FRIGHTENING.
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME—I CAN HEAR IT IN YOUR VOICE.
I... HAVE A HUNCH. A HUNCH THAT SENTINEL'S PLANNING SOMETHING—AND THAT IT INVOLVES THE DECEPTICONS.
MEGATRON—IS HE ALRIGHT?
WELL HE'S SAFE, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN. THEY DAREN'T KILL HIM FOR FEAR OF MARTYRING HIM, SO THEY'VE SHIPPED HIM OFF-WORLD. THE LAST I HEARD HE WAS MINING NUCLEON ON MESSATINE.
"AAAND..."
"...STOP! THAT'S A CLIFFHANGER, RATCHET—RIGHT THERE!
"BUT BEFORE PAX SETS OFF ON HIS JOURNEY, LET'S CATCH UP WITH OUR HEROES FROM MECHAFORENSICS. CHROMEDOME...?"

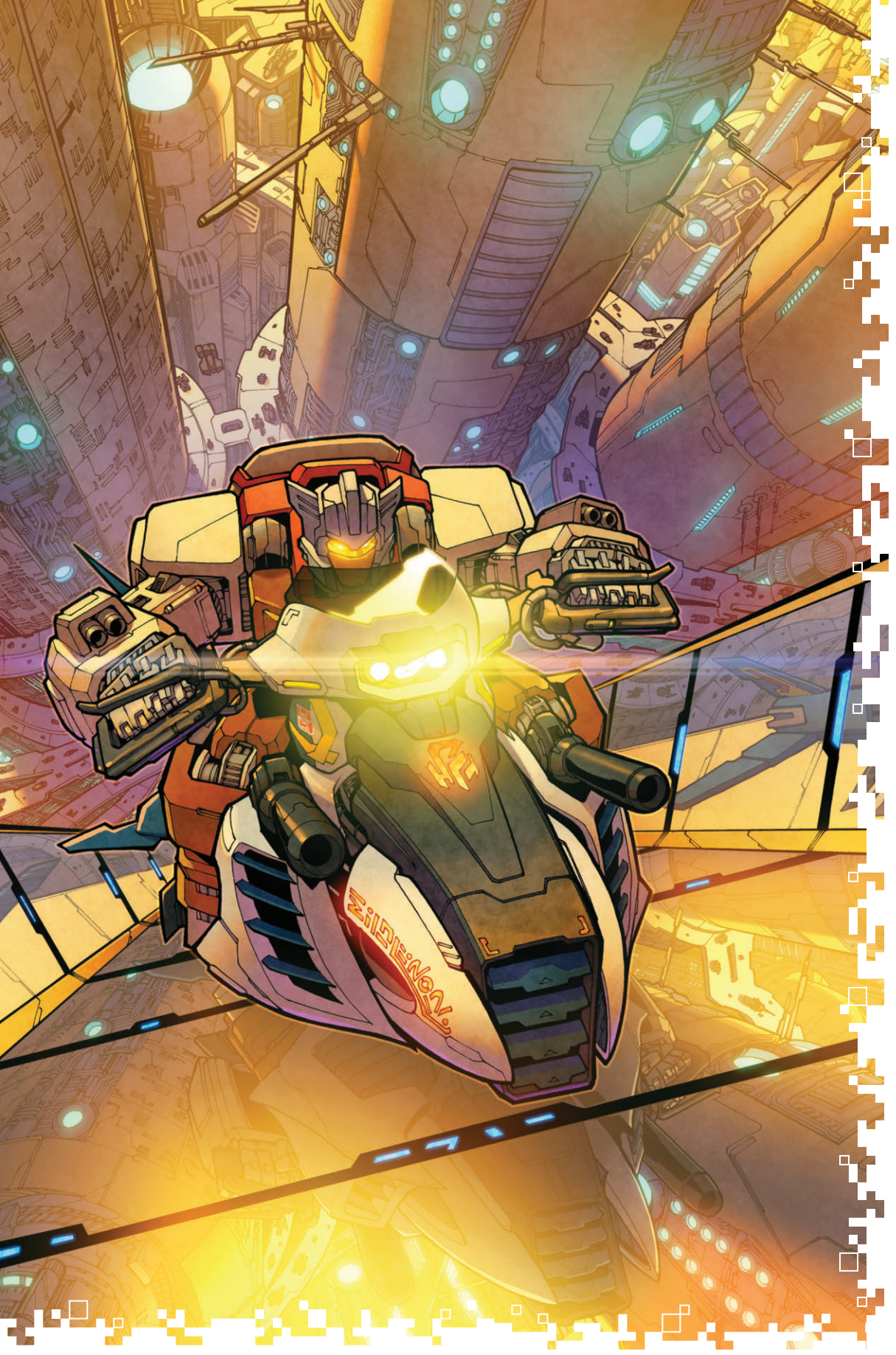

"SO BY THE TIME WE REACHED TRANSLUCENTICA HEIGHTS, THE CURFEW HAD KICKED IN. THE STREETS WERE DESERTED."
YOU KNOW, IF WE HAD DECENT ALT MODES WE WOULDN'T NEED SKYPARTS TO GET AROUND. WE COULD JUST FLY EVERYWHERE.
I SPENT MY FORMATIVE YEARS IN PETREX, A TWIN-MODE TOWN NORTH OF THE PANCONTINENTAL EXPRESSWAY.
I KNOW. YOU SAID IT WAS GOVERNED BY—
BY FUNCTIONIST HARDLINERS. EXACTLY. MAKING DISPARAGING REMARKS ABOUT YOUR ALT MODE WAS AN IMPRISONABLE OFFENSE.
SOUNDS LIKE HELL.
OH, I DON'T KNOW. IT TAUGHT ME TO RESPECT RULES. WITHOUT DISCIPLINE, WE'RE LOST.
COURSE THESE DAYS THEY'D SEND YOU TO THE INSTITUTE AND BE DONE WITH IT.
PFFT.
HOW DO YOU EVEN MAKE THAT SOUND?
YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN THE INSTITUTE, DO YOU?
I DON'T KNOW—BUT WHETHER IT'S REAL OR NOT, THE IDEA OF THE INSTITUTE FASCINATES ME.


THE WARDEN HERE IS ONE OF OUR MOST ENTHUSIASTIC INFORMANTS. OBSESSED WITH TRIPLE M*, THEN IT WAS THE DECEPTICONS...
...THIS WAS BEFORE PROTEUS MADE HIS RATHER ILL-ADVISED PROMISE.
NONETHELESS, IF SENATOR SHERMA HAD BUSINESS HERE, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND OUT WHAT—
*MILITANT MONOFORM MOVEMENT
SCRISH
HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVE HERE? TWO THOUSAND?
2,987.
IACON'S MOST PRIVILEGED—AND EVERY ONE OF THEM ALT MODE EXEMPT.
YOU COULD BE TOO IF YOU GOT YOURSELF RECLASSIFIED AS A MEMBER OF THE INTELLECTUAL CLASS.
EASIER SAID THAN DONE. MY BRAIN GOT ME AS FAR AS MECHAFORENSICS—NO FURTHER.
THUNK
2,986.

THE OIL RESERVOIR.
THAT'S IT, GRAPPLE. SLOWLY NOW. CAREFUL.
RODIMUS?
OH, NO... ...IS THAT—IS THAT RED ALERT?
I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE TO SEE THIS, DRIFT...
...IT SAVES ME THE TROUBLE OF HAVING TO JUSTIFY WHAT I'M ABOUT TO DO TO CYCLONUS.

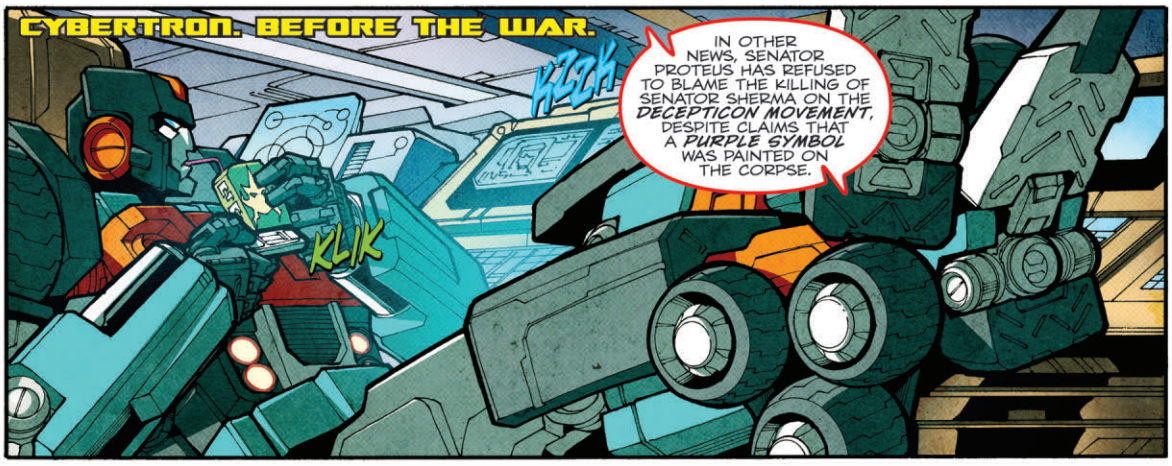
☐ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #9 COVER B

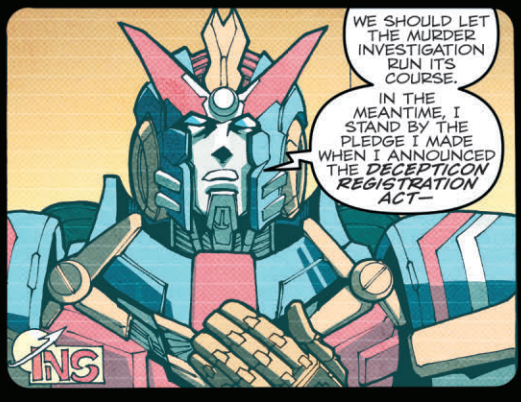
by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**

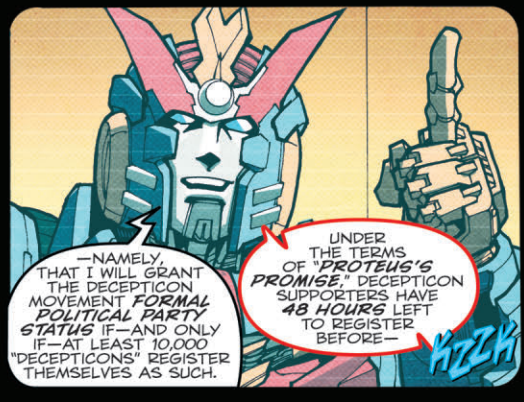


MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #10 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

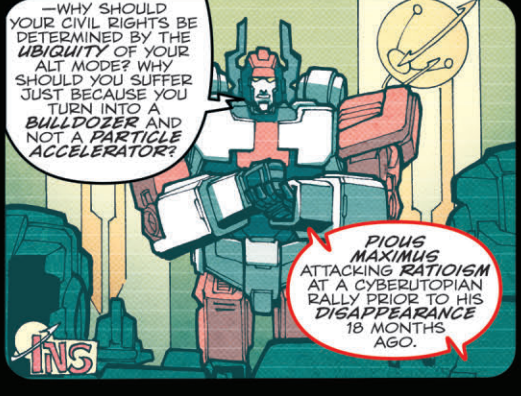

CYBERTRON. BEFORE THE WAR.
KZZK
KLIK
IN OTHER NEWS, SENATOR PROTEUS HAS REFUSED TO BLAME THE KILLING OF SENATOR SHERMA ON THE DECEPTICON MOVEMENT, DESPITE CLAIMS THAT A PURPLE SYMBOL WAS PAINTED ON THE CORPSE.

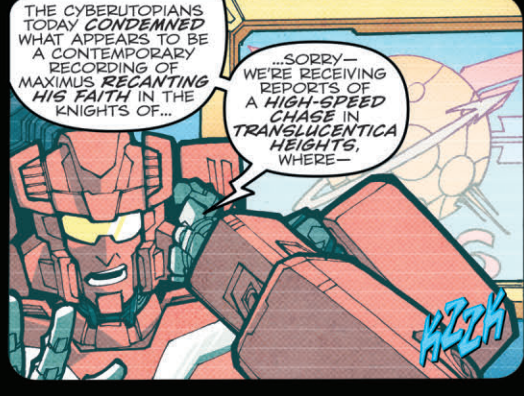

WE SHOULD LET THE MURDER INVESTIGATION RUN ITS COURSE.
IN THE MEANTIME, I STAND BY THE PLEDGE I MADE WHEN I ANNOUNCED THE DECEPTICON REGISTRATION ACT—
INS

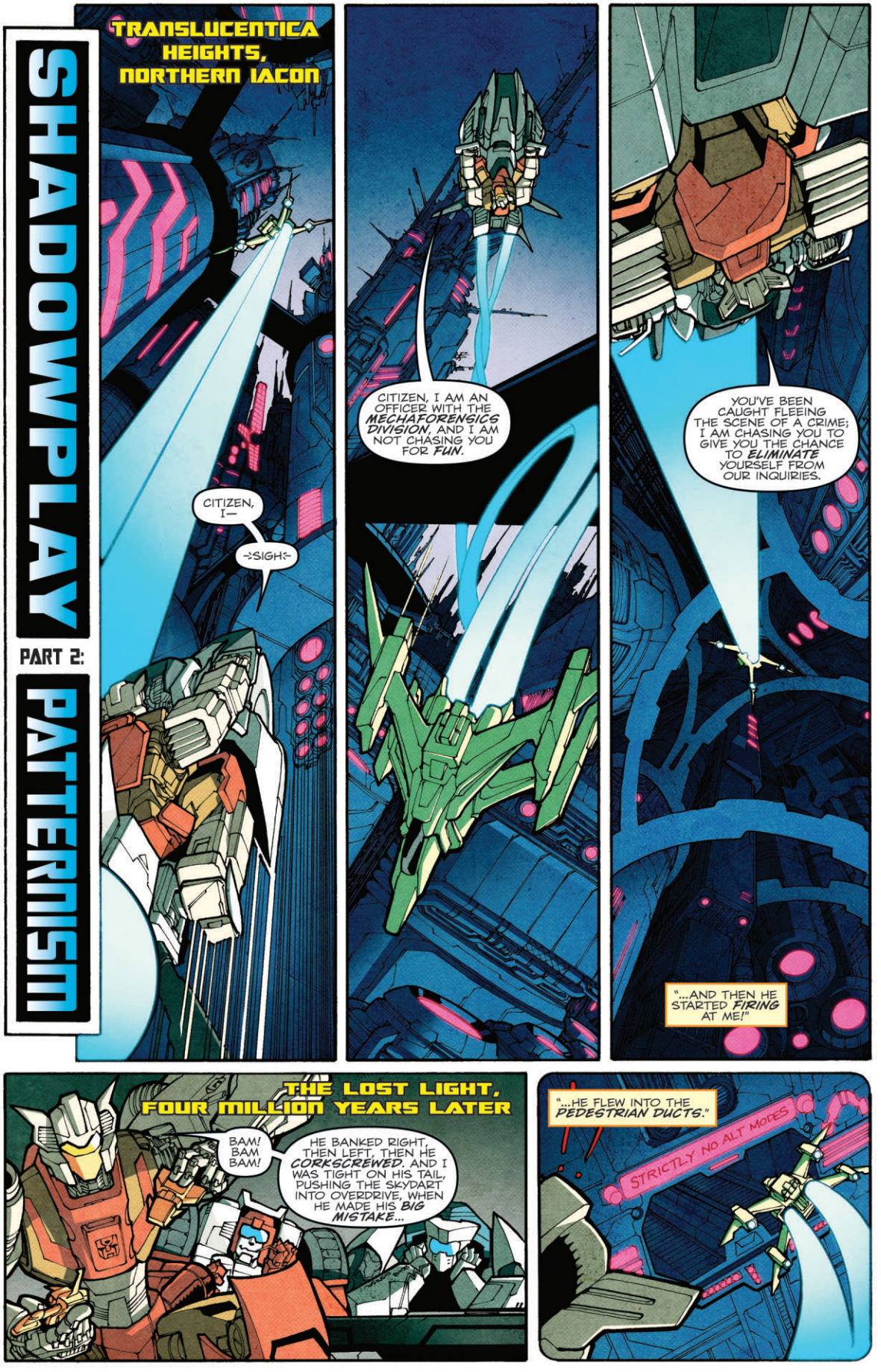

—NAMELY, THAT I WILL GRANT THE DECEPTICON MOVEMENT FORMAL POLITICAL PARTY STATUS IF—AND ONLY IF—AT LEAST 10,000 "DECEPTICONS" REGISTER THEMSELVES AS SUCH.
UNDER THE TERMS OF "PROTEUS'S PROMISE," DECEPTICON SUPPORTERS HAVE 48 HOURS LEFT TO REGISTER BEFORE—
KZZK

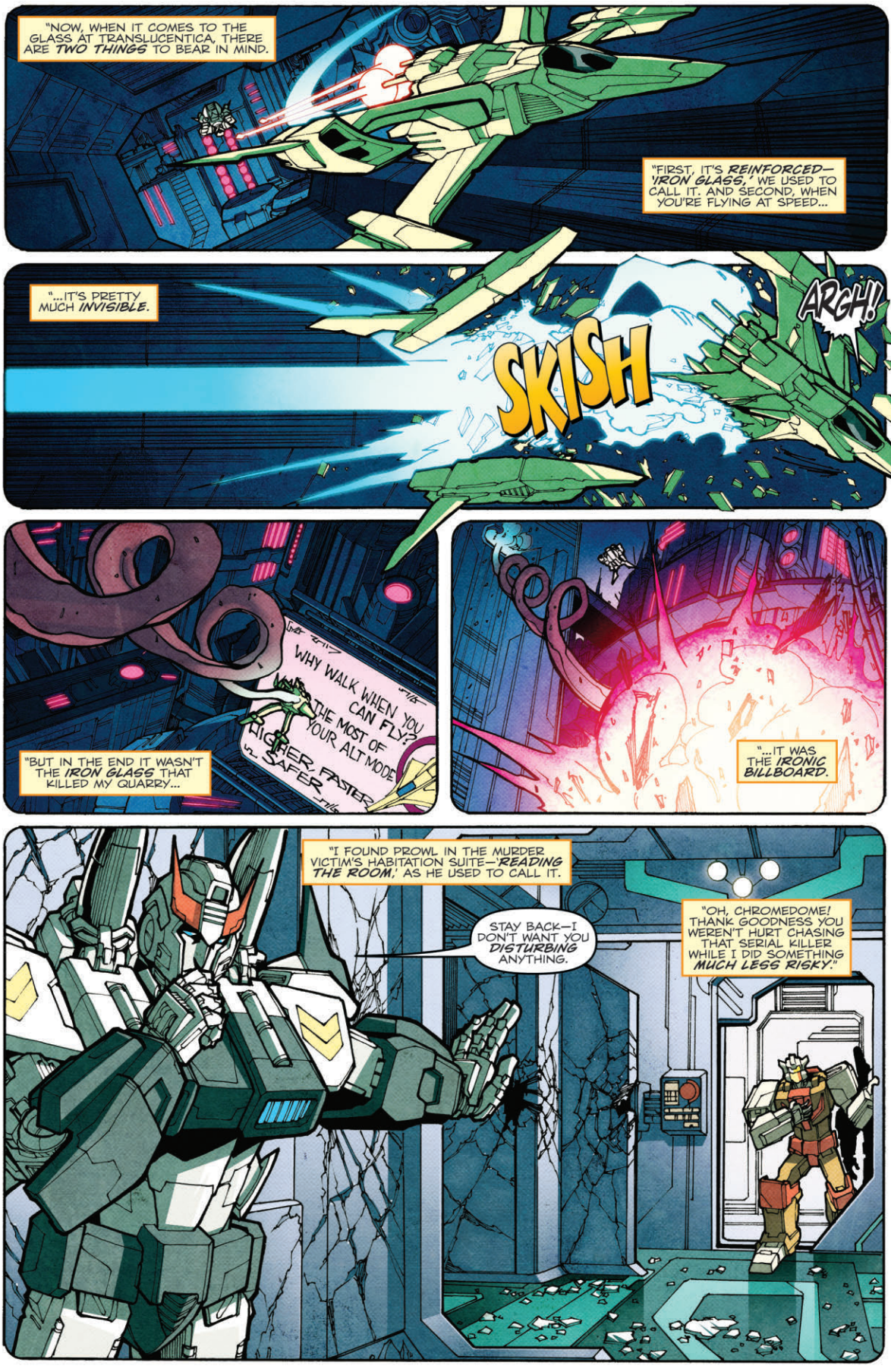
—CAN CONFIRM THAT NOMINUS PRIME'S ASCENSION TO THE ALLSPARK WILL BE MARKED WITH A FULL STATE FUNERAL, WITH HIS BODY BEING—
KZZK

NOVA'S POPULATION AUGMENTATION PROGRAM LED TO WIDESPREAD ENERGON DEPRIVATION AND, WORSE, A VIRULENT RACISM THAT PERSISTS TO THIS DAY.
IT SHOULD MAKE NO ODDS WHETHER YOU'RE FORGED OR—
*LIVE FROM THE J.A.A.T. LECTURES
KZZK


—WHY SHOULD YOUR CIVIL RIGHTS BE DETERMINED BY THE UBIQUITY OF YOUR ALT MODE? WHY SHOULD YOU SUFFER JUST BECAUSE YOU TURN INTO A BULLDOZER AND NOT A PARTICLE ACCELERATOR?
PIOUS MAXIMUS ATTACKING RATIOISM AT A CYBERUTOPIAN RALLY PRIOR TO HIS DISAPPEARANCE 18 MONTHS AGO.
INS

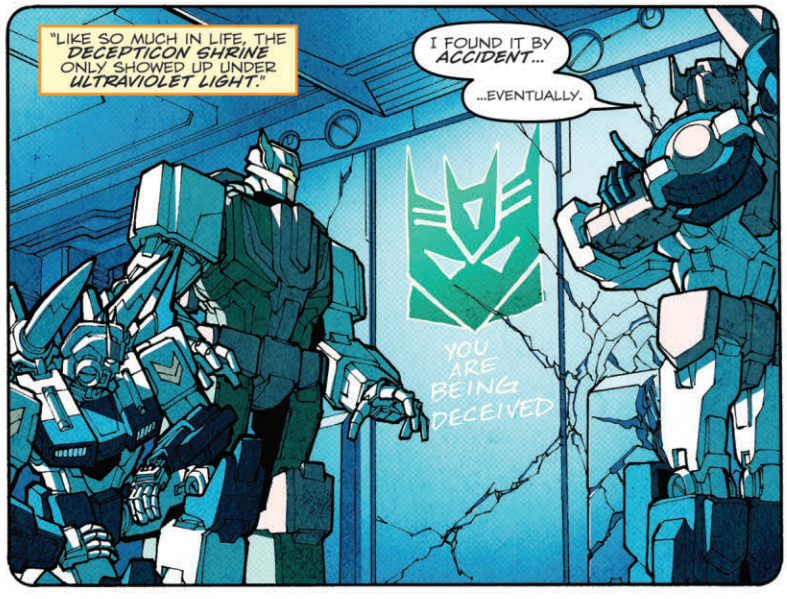

THE CYBERUTOPIANS TODAY CONDEMNED WHAT APPEARS TO BE A CONTEMPORARY RECORDING OF MAXIMUS RECANTING HIS FAITH IN THE KNIGHTS OF...
...SORRY—WE'RE RECEIVING REPORTS OF A HIGH-SPEED CHASE IN TRANSLUCENTICA HEIGHTS, WHERE—
KZZK


SHADOWPLAY
PART 2:
PATTERNISM
TRANSLUCENTICA HEIGHTS, NORTHERN IACON
CITIZEN, I—
-:SIGH:-
CITIZEN, I AM AN OFFICER WITH THE MECHAFORENSICS DIVISION, AND I AM NOT CHASING YOU FOR FUN.
YOU'VE BEEN CAUGHT FLEEING THE SCENE OF A CRIME; I AM CHASING YOU TO GIVE YOU THE CHANCE TO ELIMINATE YOURSELF FROM OUR INQUIRIES.
"...AND THEN HE STARTED FIRING AT ME!"
THE LOST LIGHT, FOUR MILLION YEARS LATER
BAM! BAM BAM!
HE BANKED RIGHT, THEN LEFT, THEN HE CORKSCREWED, AND I WAS TIGHT ON HIS TAIL, PUSHING THE SKYDART INTO OVERDRIVE, WHEN HE MADE HIS BIG MISTAKE...
"...HE FLEW INTO THE PEDESTRIAN DUCTS."
STRICTLY NO ALT MODES


"NOW, WHEN IT COMES TO THE GLASS AT TRANSLUCENTICA, THERE ARE *TWO THINGS* TO BEAR IN MIND.
"FIRST, IT'S *REINFORCED—'IRON GLASS,'* WE USED TO CALL IT. AND SECOND, WHEN YOU'RE FLYING AT SPEED...
"...IT'S PRETTY MUCH *INVISIBLE.*
SKISH
ARGH!
WHY WALK WHEN YOU CAN FLY?
THE MOST OF YOUR ALT MODE
HIGHER, FASTER
SAFER
"BUT IN THE END IT WASN'T THE *IRON GLASS* THAT KILLED MY QUARRY...
"...IT WAS THE *IRONIC BILLBOARD.*
"I FOUND PROWL IN THE MURDER VICTIM'S HABITATION SUITE—*'READING THE ROOM,'* AS HE USED TO CALL IT.
STAY BACK—I DON'T WANT YOU *DISTURBING* ANYTHING.
"OH, CHROMEDOME! THANK GOODNESS YOU WEREN'T HURT CHASING THAT SERIAL KILLER WHILE I DID SOMETHING *MUCH LESS RISKY.*"

CLEARLY YOU LET HIM GET AWAY.
DEAD?
HE'S *DEAD*, ACTUALLY.
HE CRASHED. AND YOU KNOW WHAT? HE DESERVED IT—HE WAS AN *APPALLING* FLYER.

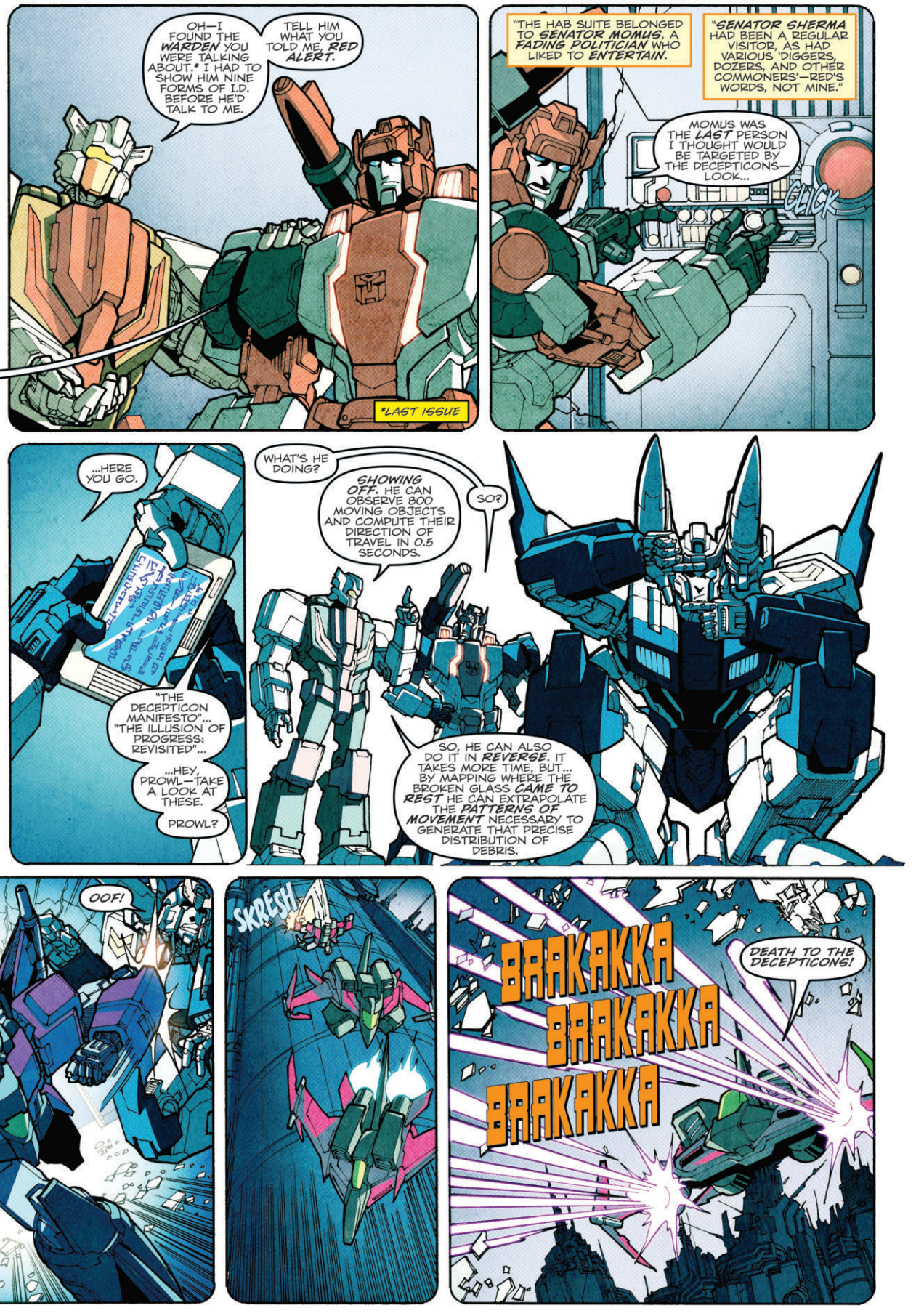
I SEE. IN THAT CASE, I *APOLOGIZE*.
TYPICAL! *YOU NEVER* BACK DOWN, EVEN WHEN—ER—YOU WHAT?
I SAID I'M *SORRY*. AND I'M GLAD YOU WEREN'T HURT.
I—RIGHT. WELL, OKAY, GOOD...
-:COUGH:-


"LIKE SO MUCH IN LIFE, THE *DECEPTICON SHRINE* ONLY SHOWED UP UNDER *ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT*."
I FOUND IT BY *ACCIDENT*...
...EVENTUALLY.
YOU ARE BEING DECEIVED

I FOUND A *DATAPAD*, TOO...

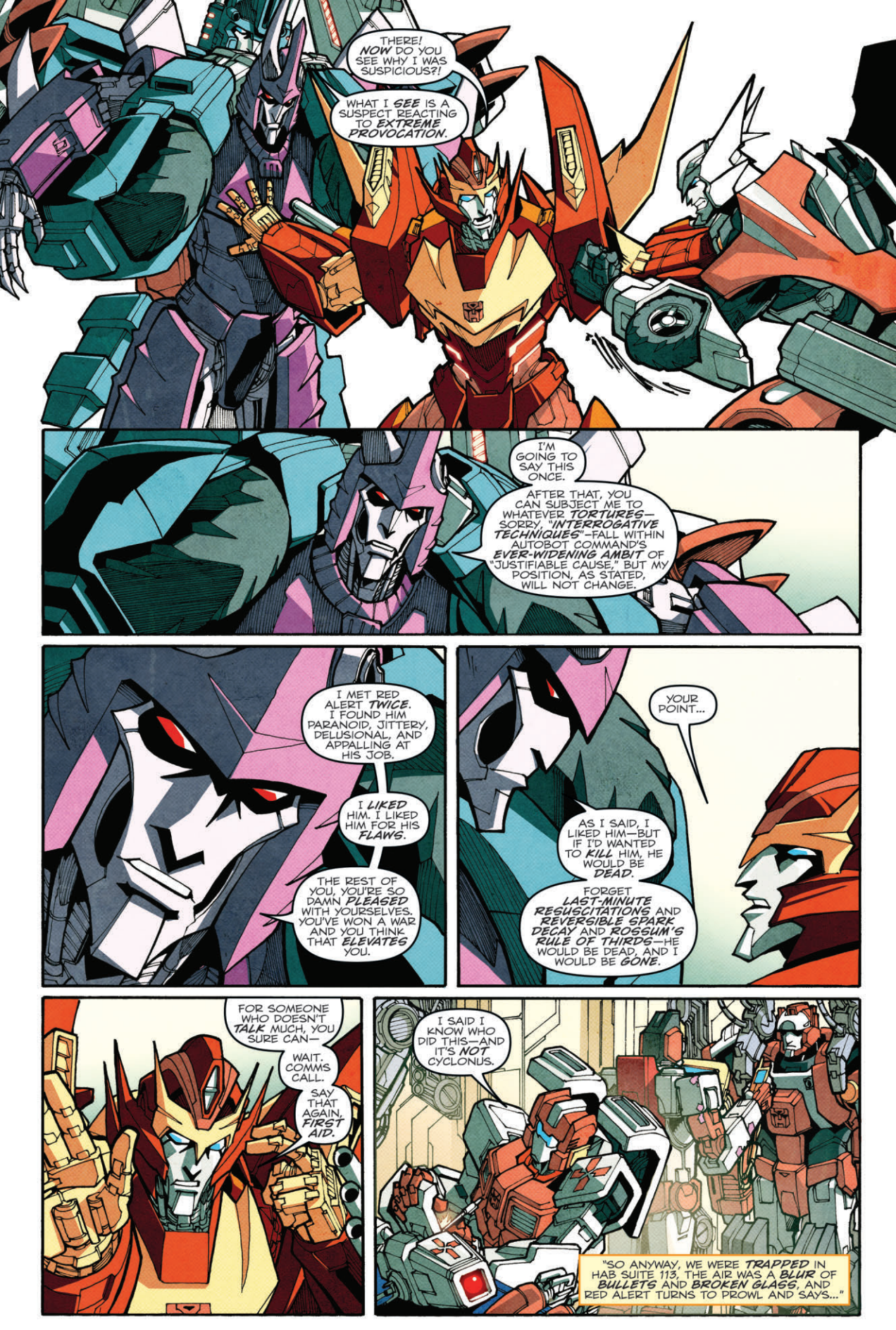
YOU'RE WORKING OUT HOW MOMUS WAS KILLED BY HIS ATTACKER...
ATTACKERS.
WHAT?

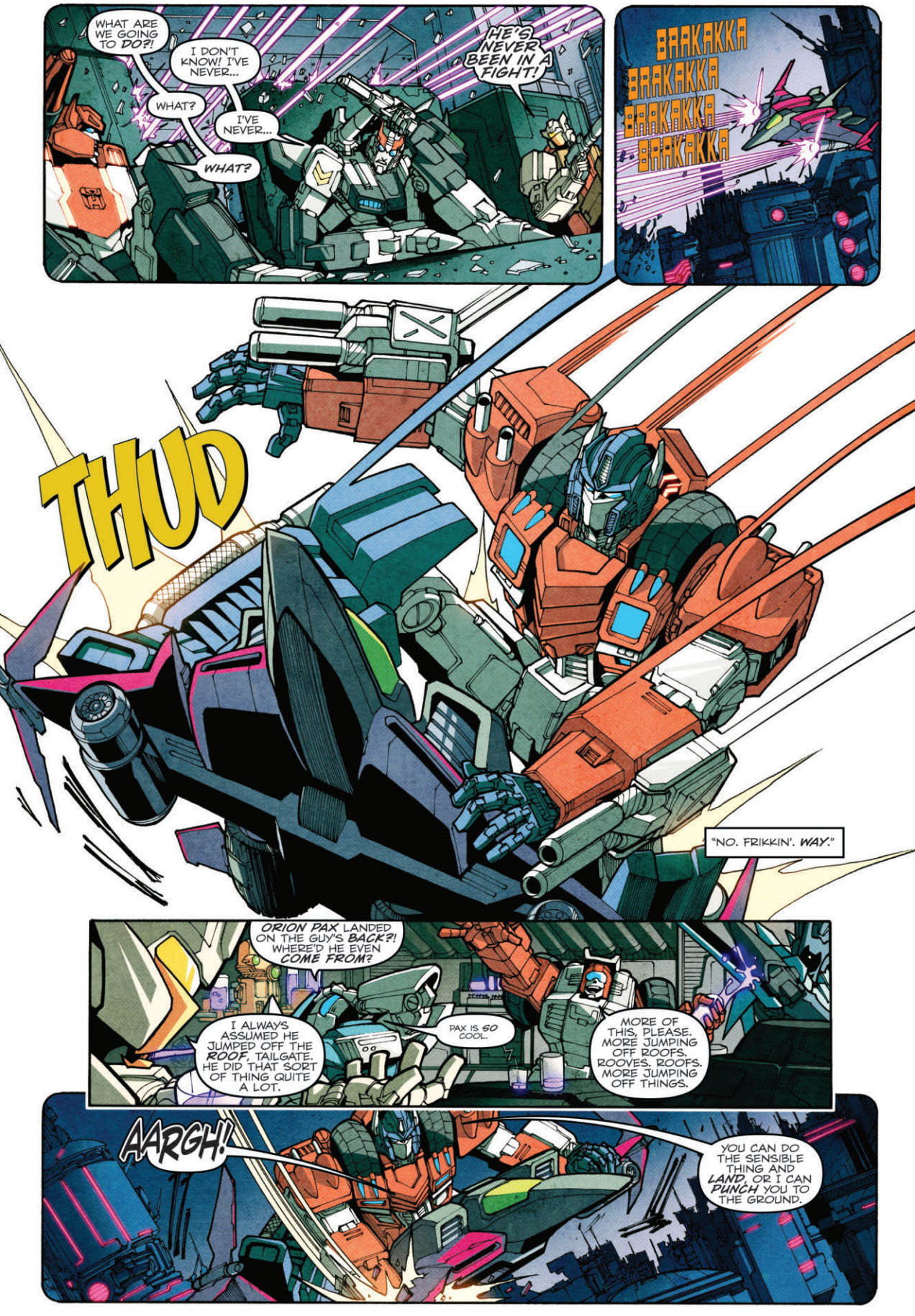
I'VE JUST REALIZED: THERE WERE *TWO* OF THEM.

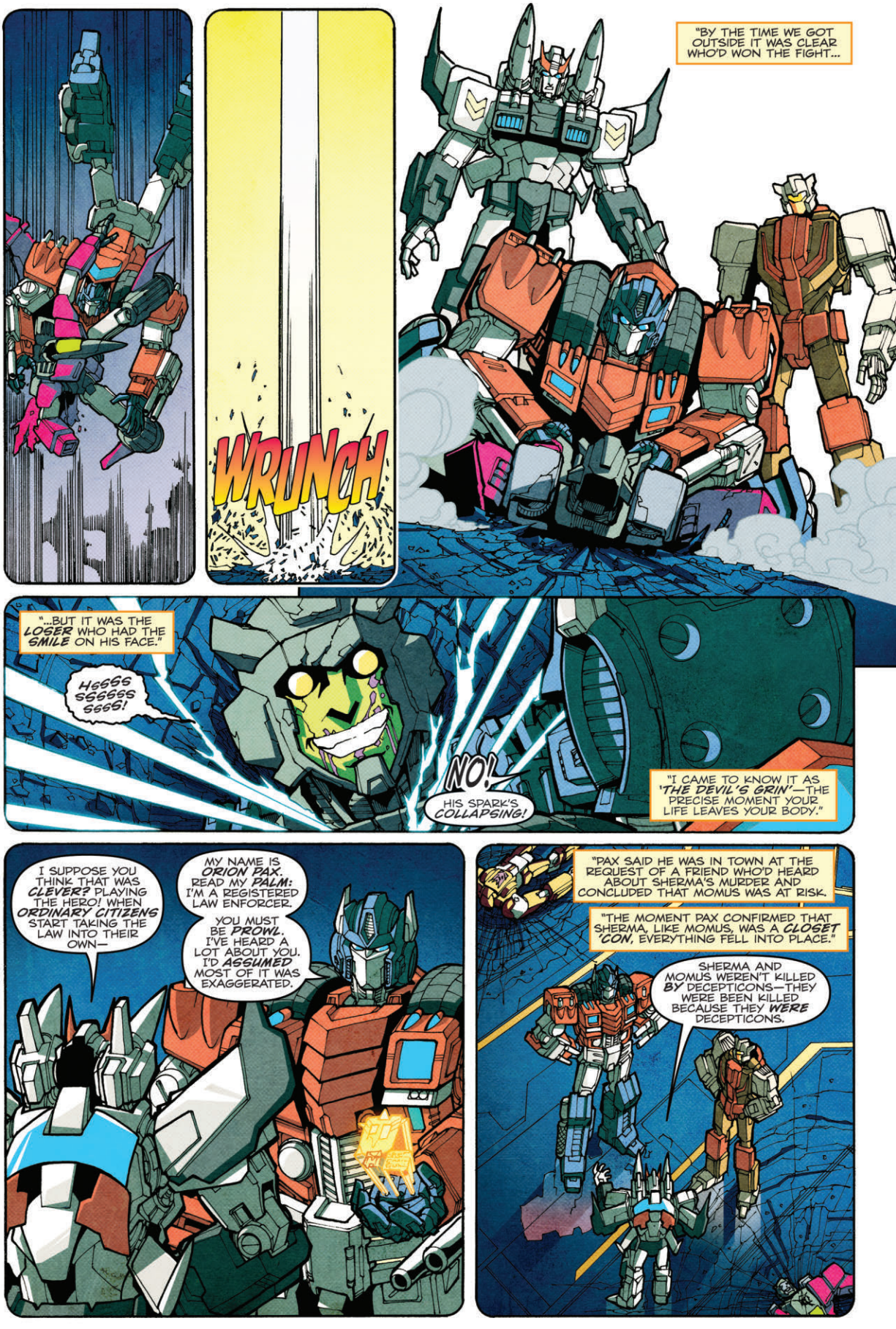

OH—I FOUND THE WARDEN YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT.* I HAD TO SHOW HIM NINE FORMS OF I.D. BEFORE HE'D TALK TO ME.
TELL HIM WHAT YOU TOLD ME, RED ALERT.
*LAST ISSUE
"THE HAB SUITE BELONGED TO SENATOR MOMUS, A FADING POLITICIAN WHO LIKED TO ENTERTAIN.
"SENATOR SHERMA HAD BEEN A REGULAR VISITOR, AS HAD VARIOUS 'DIGGERS, DOZERS, AND OTHER COMMONERS'—RED'S WORDS, NOT MINE."
MOMUS WAS THE LAST PERSON I THOUGHT WOULD BE TARGETED BY THE DECEPTICONS—LOOK...
GLICK
...HERE YOU GO.
"THE DECEPTICON MANIFESTO"... "THE ILLUSION OF PROGRESS: REVISITED"...
...HEY, PROWL—TAKE A LOOK AT THESE.
PROWL?
WHAT'S HE DOING?
SHOWING OFF. HE CAN OBSERVE 800 MOVING OBJECTS AND COMPUTE THEIR DIRECTION OF TRAVEL IN 0.5 SECONDS.
SO?
SO, HE CAN ALSO DO IT IN REVERSE. IT TAKES MORE TIME, BUT... BY MAPPING WHERE THE BROKEN GLASS CAME TO REST HE CAN EXTRAPOLATE THE PATTERNS OF MOVEMENT NECESSARY TO GENERATE THAT PRECISE DISTRIBUTION OF DEBRIS.
OOF!
SKREESH
BRAKAKKA BRAKAKKA BRAKAKKA
DEATH TO THE DECEPTICONS!

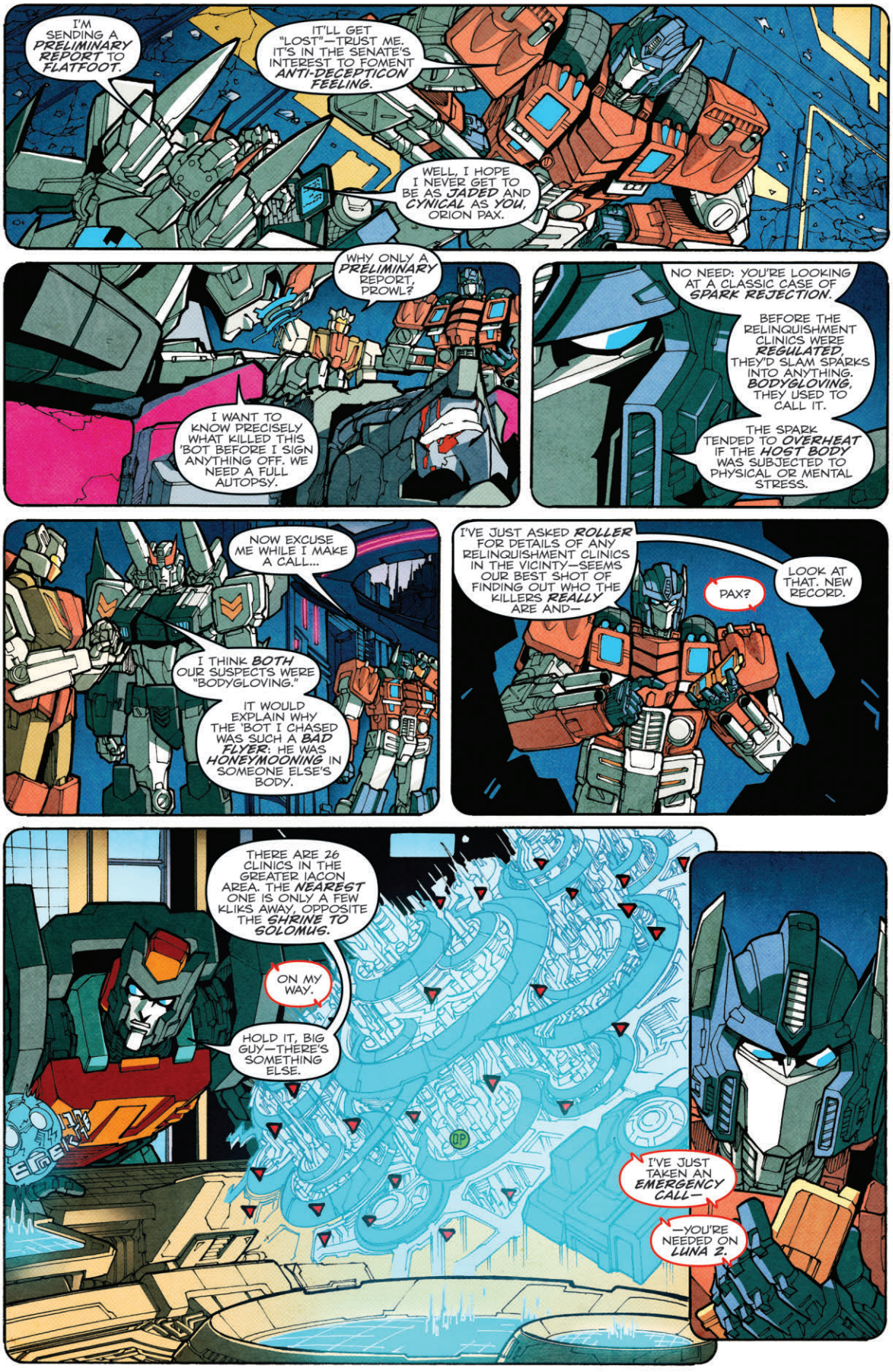
THE LOST LIGHT: SHUTTLE BAY 3
"MAGNUS. YOU TOOK YOUR TIME."
"I WAS ON RECONNAISSANCE, REMEMBER? I SENT YOU THAT MEMO..."
"I—YES. YES, OF COURSE YOU DID."
"YOU DO READ MY MEMOS, DON'T YOU, RODIMUS?"
"IF THERE'S A REASON NOT TO, I'VE YET TO FIND IT. I READ ALL YOUR MEMOS AND EVERY ONE OF YOUR MANY, MANY, MANY REPORTS.
"AND SINCE YOU'RE FINALLY HERE, YOU CAN READ ONE OF MINE."
PERCEPTOR'S LAB MAKESHIFT INTERROGATION ROOM
"WE FOUND RED ALERT IN THE OIL RESERVOIR. NO HEAD. PRETTY SURE CYCLONUS IS TO BLAME—OBV. WATCH THIS SPACE."
"OBV" STANDS FOR OBVIOUSLY.
NO, I, ER—I GUESSED THAT.
HOW'S RED ALERT?
THERE'S A WEAK SPARK. WE FOUND HIS HEAD, SO FIRST AID THINKS HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SAVE HIM.
AND CYCLONUS—WHAT HAVE YOU CHARGED HIM WITH, EXACTLY?
...
...
OKAY. YOU'VE READ HIM HIS RIGHTS, THOUGH.
YOU DIDN'T READ HIM HIS—
—DOES HE EVEN KNOW WHY HE'S HERE?
WAIT—HAVE WE SWAPPED ROLES OR SOMETHING?
I'M THE ONE WHO GAVE HIM A CHANCE—YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HATES HIM.
"SCREW UP AND I'LL DEMOLISH YOU." DID I SAY THAT? OH, NO, WAIT, THAT WAS YOU.
RODIMUS, YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW DUE PROCESS. THIS ISN'T—WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO RUN AROUND CAPTURING PEOPLE ANYMORE!
CYCLONUS IS PRACTICALLY A DECEPTICON—AND THAT MAKES HIM OUR PRIME SUSPECT.
DRIFT AGREES. HE'S DETERMINED TO GET A CONFESSION.

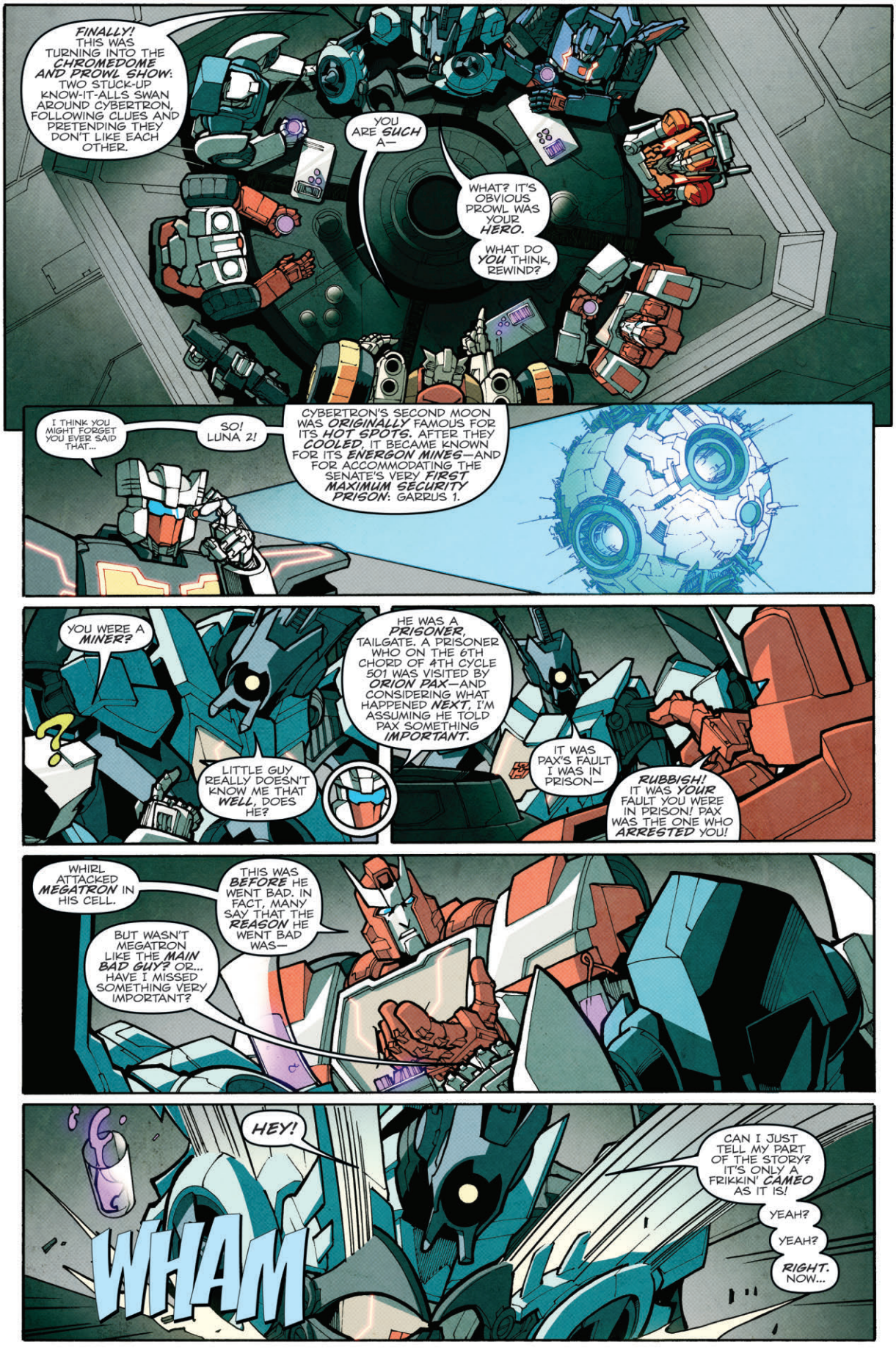
"NO, HE'S DETERMINED TO IMPRESS YOU..."
I NOTICE YOU CAME HERE WITHOUT A FIGHT.
RODIMUS ASKED ME TO COME HERE. HE'S THE CAPTAIN OF THIS SHIP. I DID AS ASKED.
YOU PRACTICALLY HANDED YOURSELF IN.
I DON'T MIND BEING INTERVIEWED, BUT I OBJECT TO BEING THREATENED. SO I SUGGEST YOU PUT THE SWORD DOWN AND APOLOGIZE.
DO YOU FEEL THREATENED?
THWOK
THUNK
APOLOGY ACCEPTED.
ENOUGH!

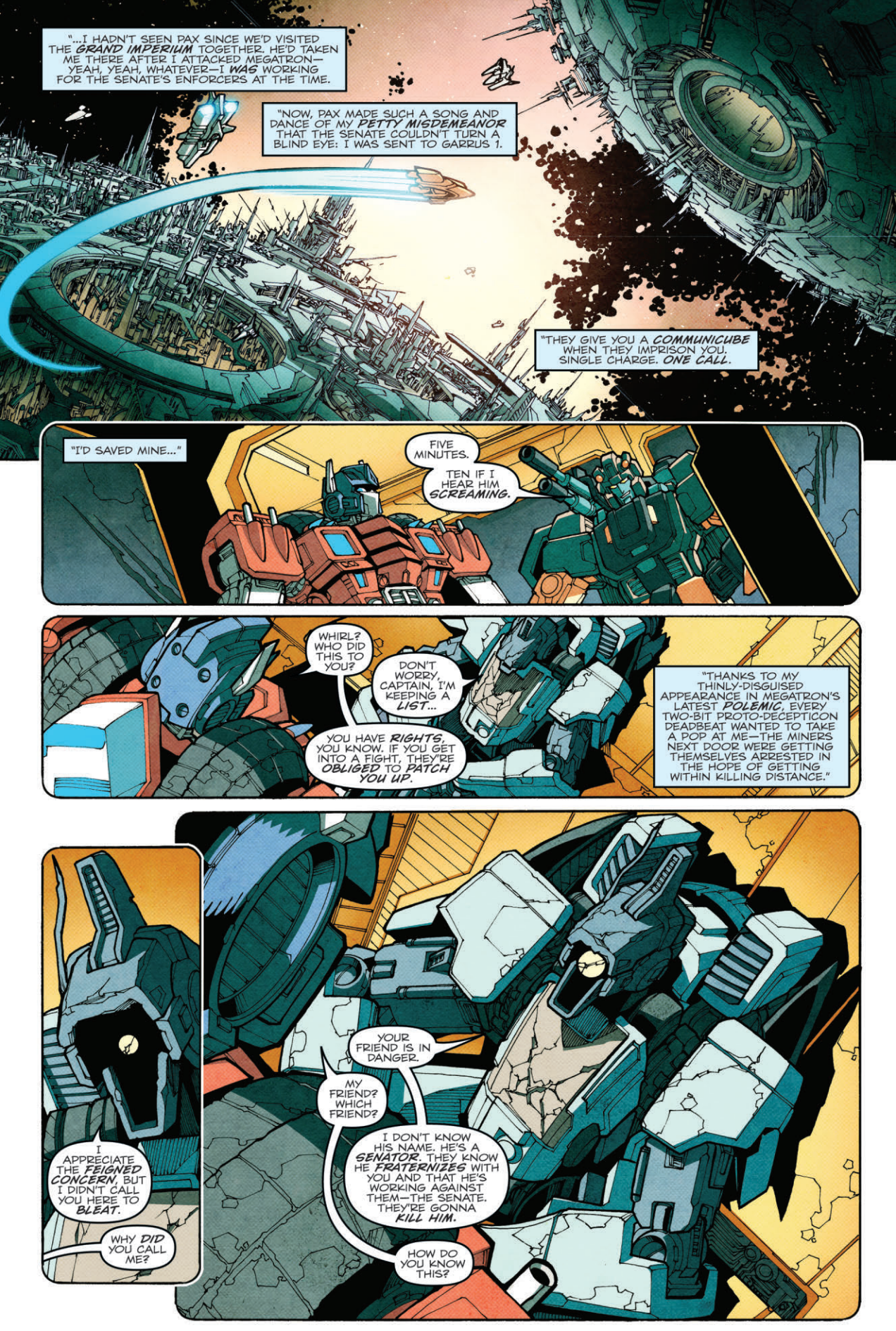

THERE! NOW DO YOU SEE WHY I WAS SUSPICIOUS?!
WHAT I SEE IS A SUSPECT REACTING TO EXTREME PROVOCATION.
I'M GOING TO SAY THIS ONCE.
AFTER THAT, YOU CAN SUBJECT ME TO WHATEVER TORTURES—SORRY, "INTERROGATIVE TECHNIQUES"—FALL WITHIN AUTOBOT COMMAND'S EVER-WIDENING AMBIT OF "JUSTIFIABLE CAUSE," BUT MY POSITION, AS STATED, WILL NOT CHANGE.
I MET RED ALERT TWICE. I FOUND HIM PARANOID, JITTERY, DELUSIONAL, AND APPALLING AT HIS JOB.
I LIKED HIM. I LIKED HIM FOR HIS FLAWS.
THE REST OF YOU, YOU'RE SO DAMN PLEASED WITH YOURSELVES. YOU'VE WON A WAR AND YOU THINK THAT ELEVATES YOU.
YOUR POINT...
AS I SAID, I LIKED HIM—BUT IF I'D WANTED TO KILL HIM, HE WOULD BE DEAD.
FORGET LAST-MINUTE RESUSCITATIONS AND REVERSIBLE SPARK DECAY AND ROSSUM'S RULE OF THIRDS—HE WOULD BE DEAD, AND I WOULD BE GONE.
FOR SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T TALK MUCH, YOU SURE CAN—
WAIT. COMMS CALL.
SAY THAT AGAIN, FIRST AID.
I SAID I KNOW WHO DID THIS—AND IT'S NOT CYCLONUS.
"SO ANYWAY, WE WERE TRAPPED IN HAB SUITE 113, THE AIR WAS A BLUR OF BULLETS AND BROKEN GLASS, AND RED ALERT TURNS TO PROWL AND SAYS..."

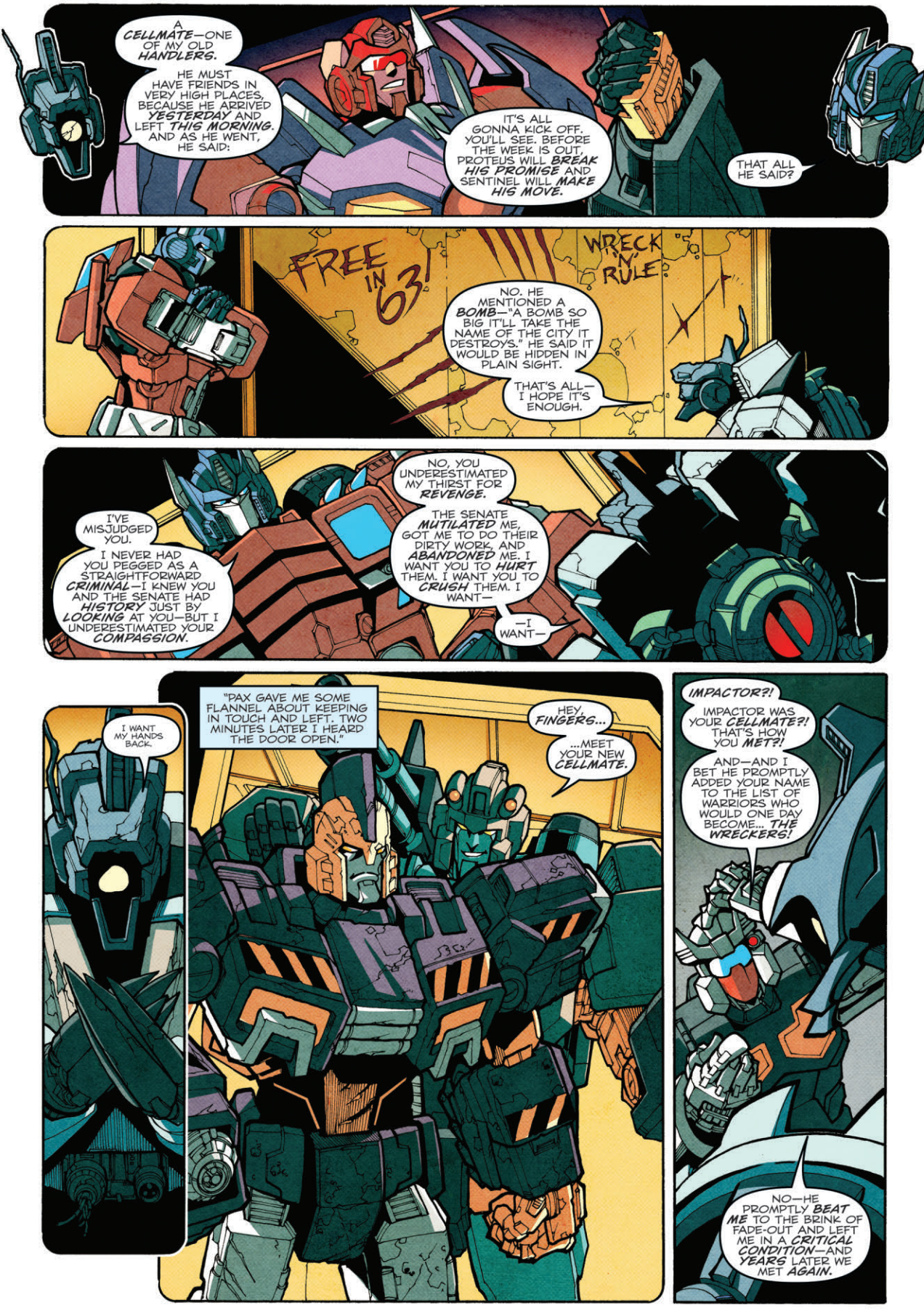

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?!
I DON'T KNOW! I'VE NEVER...
WHAT?
I'VE NEVER...
WHAT?
HE'S NEVER BEEN IN A FIGHT!
BRAKAKKA
BRAKAKKA
BRAKAKKA
BRAKAKKA
THUD
"NO. FRIKKIN'. WAY."
ORION PAX LANDED ON THE GUY'S BACK?! WHERE'D HE EVEN COME FROM?
I ALWAYS ASSUMED HE JUMPED OFF THE ROOF, TAILGATE. HE DID THAT SORT OF THING QUITE A LOT.
PAX IS SO COOL.
MORE OF THIS, PLEASE. MORE JUMPING OFF ROOFS. ROOVES. ROOFS. MORE JUMPING OFF THINGS.
AARGH!
YOU CAN DO THE SENSIBLE THING AND LAND, OR I CAN PUNCH YOU TO THE GROUND.


WRUNCH
"BY THE TIME WE GOT OUTSIDE IT WAS CLEAR WHO'D WON THE FIGHT...
"...BUT IT WAS THE LOSER WHO HAD THE SMILE ON HIS FACE."
HSSSS SSSSSS SSSS!
NO!
HIS SPARK'S COLLAPSING!
"I CAME TO KNOW IT AS 'THE DEVIL'S GRIN'—THE PRECISE MOMENT YOUR LIFE LEAVES YOUR BODY."
I SUPPOSE YOU THINK THAT WAS CLEVER? PLAYING THE HERO! WHEN ORDINARY CITIZENS START TAKING THE LAW INTO THEIR OWN—
MY NAME IS ORION PAX. READ MY PALM: I'M A REGISTERED LAW ENFORCER.
YOU MUST BE PROWL. I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU. I'D ASSUMED MOST OF IT WAS EXAGGERATED.
"PAX SAID HE WAS IN TOWN AT THE REQUEST OF A FRIEND WHO'D HEARD ABOUT SHERMA'S MURDER AND CONCLUDED THAT MOMUS WAS AT RISK.
"THE MOMENT PAX CONFIRMED THAT SHERMA, LIKE MOMUS, WAS A CLOSET 'CON, EVERYTHING FELL INTO PLACE."
SHERMA AND MOMUS WEREN'T KILLED BY DECEPTICONS—THEY WERE BEEN KILLED BECAUSE THEY WERE DECEPTICONS.


I'M SENDING A PRELIMINARY REPORT TO FLATFOOT.
IT'LL GET "LOST"—TRUST ME. IT'S IN THE SENATE'S INTEREST TO FOMENT ANTI-DECEPTICON FEELING.
WELL, I HOPE I NEVER GET TO BE AS JADED AND CYNICAL AS YOU, ORION PAX.
WHY ONLY A PRELIMINARY REPORT, PROWL?
I WANT TO KNOW PRECISELY WHAT KILLED THIS 'BOT BEFORE I SIGN ANYTHING OFF. WE NEED A FULL AUTOPSY.
NO NEED: YOU'RE LOOKING AT A CLASSIC CASE OF SPARK REJECTION.
BEFORE THE RELINQUISHMENT CLINICS WERE REGULATED, THEY'D SLAM SPARKS INTO ANYTHING. BODYGLOVING, THEY USED TO CALL IT.
THE SPARK TENDED TO OVERHEAT IF THE HOST BODY WAS SUBJECTED TO PHYSICAL OR MENTAL STRESS.
NOW EXCUSE ME WHILE I MAKE A CALL...
I THINK BOTH OUR SUSPECTS WERE "BODYGLOVING."
IT WOULD EXPLAIN WHY THE 'BOT I CHASED WAS SUCH A BAD FLYER: HE WAS HONEYMOONING IN SOMEONE ELSE'S BODY.
I'VE JUST ASKED ROLLER FOR DETAILS OF ANY RELINQUISHMENT CLINICS IN THE VICINTY—SEEMS OUR BEST SHOT OF FINDING OUT WHO THE KILLERS REALLY ARE AND—
PAX?
LOOK AT THAT. NEW RECORD.
THERE ARE 26 CLINICS IN THE GREATER IACON AREA. THE NEAREST ONE IS ONLY A FEW KLIKS AWAY, OPPOSITE THE SHRINE TO SOLOMUS.
ON MY WAY.
HOLD IT, BIG GUY—THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE.
I'VE JUST TAKEN AN EMERGENCY CALL—
—YOU'RE NEEDED ON LUNA 2.

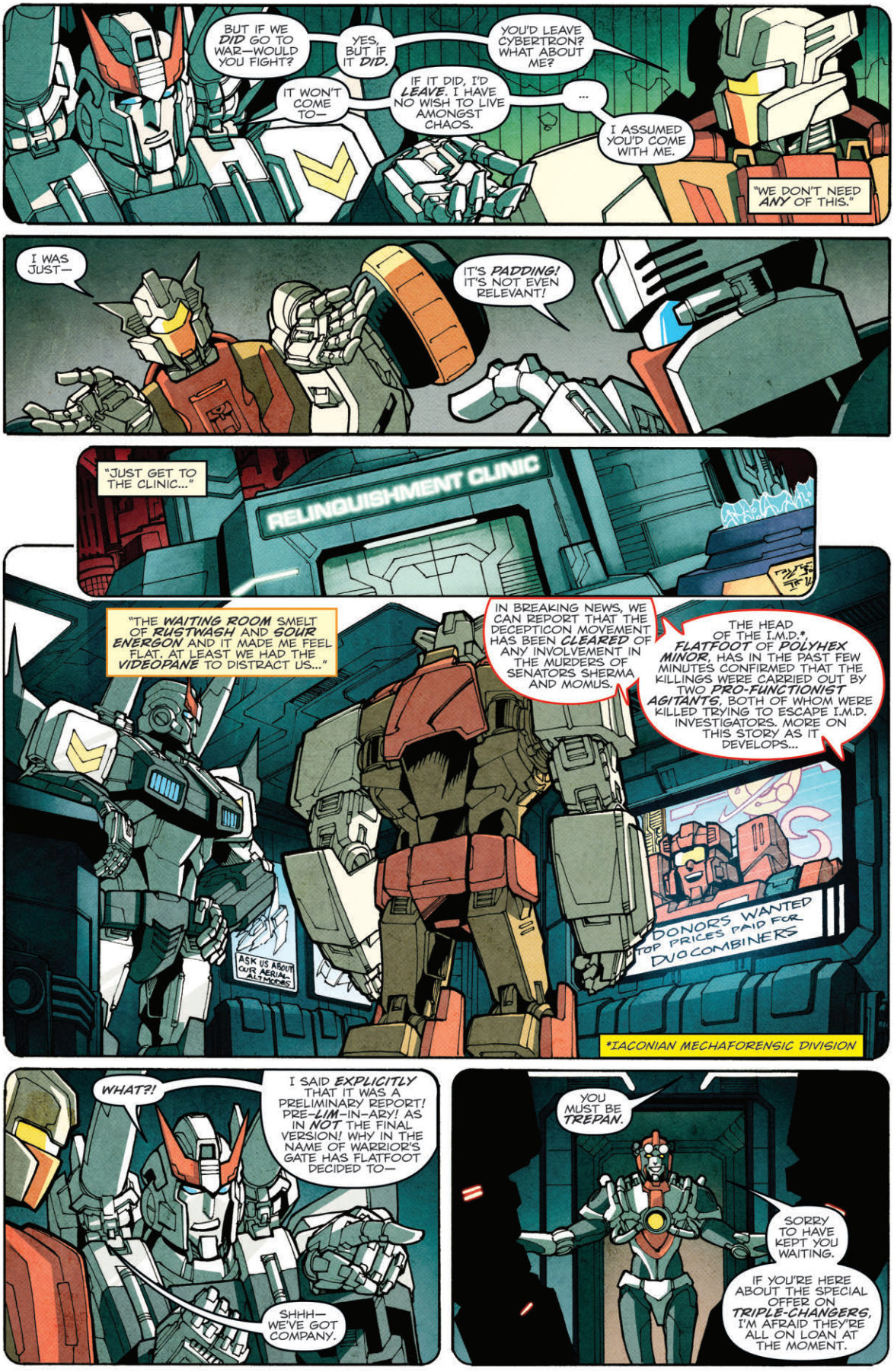

FINALLY! THIS WAS TURNING INTO THE CHROMEDOME AND PROWL SHOW: TWO STUCK-UP KNOW-IT-ALLS SWAN AROUND CYBERTRON, FOLLOWING CLUES AND PRETENDING THEY DON'T LIKE EACH OTHER.
YOU ARE SUCH A—
WHAT? IT'S OBVIOUS PROWL WAS YOUR HERO.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, REWIND?
I THINK YOU MIGHT FORGET YOU EVER SAID THAT...
SO! LUNA 2!
CYBERTRON'S SECOND MOON WAS ORIGINALLY FAMOUS FOR ITS HOT SPOTS. AFTER THEY COOLED, IT BECAME KNOWN FOR ITS ENERGON MINES—AND FOR ACCOMMODATING THE SENATE'S VERY FIRST MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON: GARRUS 1.
YOU WERE A MINER?
LITTLE GUY REALLY DOESN'T KNOW ME THAT WELL, DOES HE?
HE WAS A PRISONER, TAILGATE. A PRISONER WHO ON THE 6TH CHORD OF 4TH CYCLE 501 WAS VISITED BY ORION PAX—AND CONSIDERING WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, I'M ASSUMING HE TOLD PAX SOMETHING IMPORTANT.
IT WAS PAX'S FAULT I WAS IN PRISON—
RUBBISH! IT WAS YOUR FAULT YOU WERE IN PRISON! PAX WAS THE ONE WHO ARRESTED YOU!
WHIRL ATTACKED MEGATRON IN HIS CELL.
BUT WASN'T MEGATRON LIKE THE MAIN BAD GUY? OR... HAVE I MISSED SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT?
THIS WAS BEFORE HE WENT BAD. IN FACT, MANY SAY THAT THE REASON HE WENT BAD WAS—
HEY!
WHAM
CAN I JUST TELL MY PART OF THE STORY? IT'S ONLY A FRIKKIN' CAMEO AS IT IS!
YEAH?
YEAH?
RIGHT. NOW...

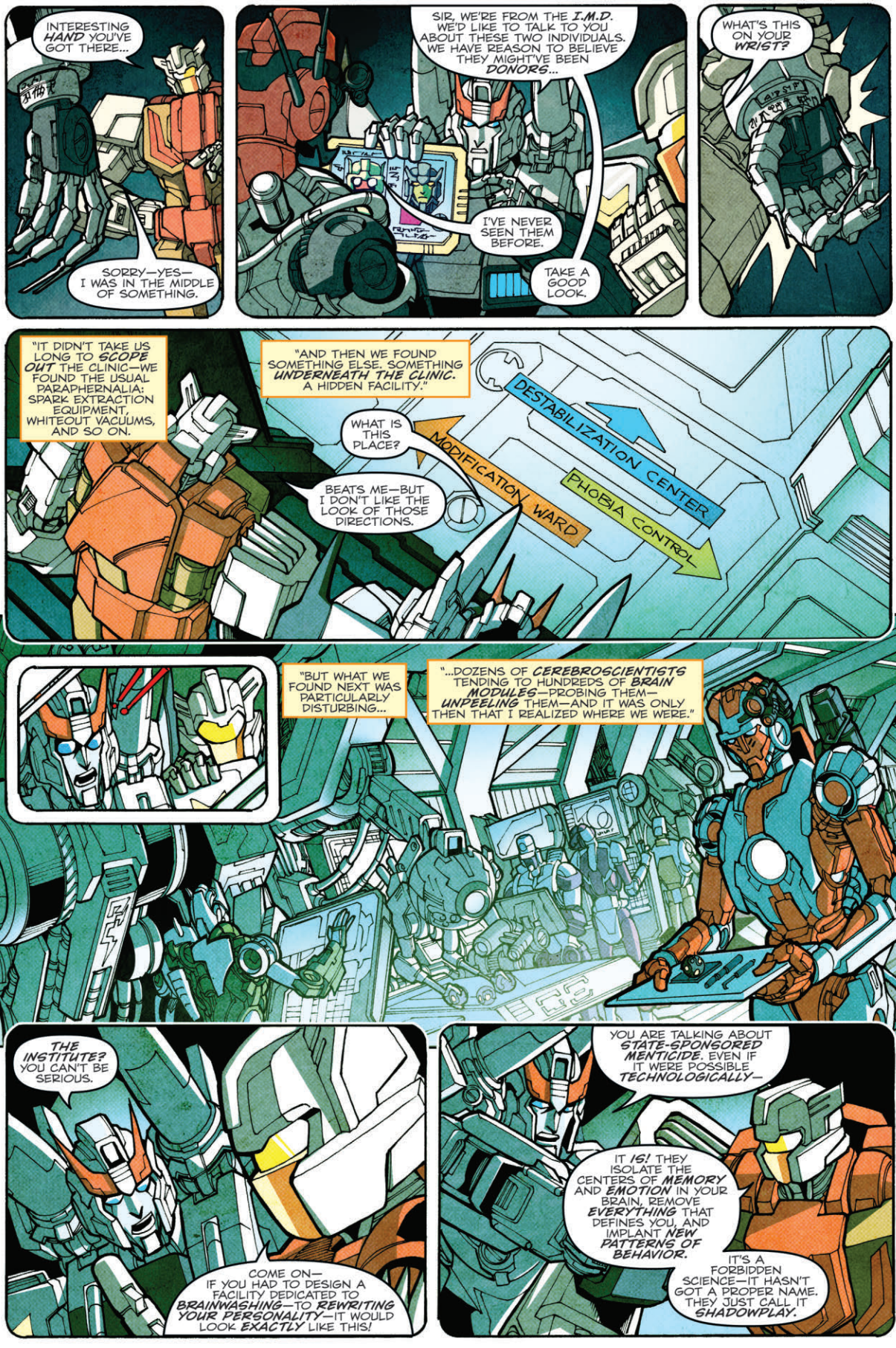

"...I HADN'T SEEN PAX SINCE WE'D VISITED THE GRAND IMPERIUM TOGETHER. HE'D TAKEN ME THERE AFTER I ATTACKED MEGATRON—YEAH, YEAH, WHATEVER—I WAS WORKING FOR THE SENATE'S ENFORCERS AT THE TIME.
"NOW, PAX MADE SUCH A SONG AND DANCE OF MY PETTY MISDEMEANOR THAT THE SENATE COULDN'T TURN A BLIND EYE: I WAS SENT TO GARRUS 1.
"THEY GIVE YOU A COMMUNICUBE WHEN THEY IMPRISON YOU. SINGLE CHARGE. ONE CALL.
"I'D SAVED MINE..."
FIVE MINUTES.
TEN IF I HEAR HIM SCREAMING.
WHIRL? WHO DID THIS TO YOU?
DON'T WORRY, CAPTAIN, I'M KEEPING A LIST...
YOU HAVE RIGHTS, YOU KNOW. IF YOU GET INTO A FIGHT, THEY'RE OBLIGED TO PATCH YOU UP.
"THANKS TO MY THINLY-DISGUISED APPEARANCE IN MEGATRON'S LATEST POLEMIC, EVERY TWO-BIT PROTO-DECEPTICON DEADBEAT WANTED TO TAKE A POP AT ME—THE MINERS NEXT DOOR WERE GETTING THEMSELVES ARRESTED IN THE HOPE OF GETTING WITHIN KILLING DISTANCE."
I APPRECIATE THE FEIGNED CONCERN, BUT I DIDN'T CALL YOU HERE TO BLEAT.
WHY DID YOU CALL ME?
YOUR FRIEND IS IN DANGER.
MY FRIEND? WHICH FRIEND?
I DON'T KNOW HIS NAME. HE'S A SENATOR. THEY KNOW HE FRATERNIZES WITH YOU AND THAT HE'S WORKING AGAINST THEM—THE SENATE. THEY'RE GONNA KILL HIM.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS?

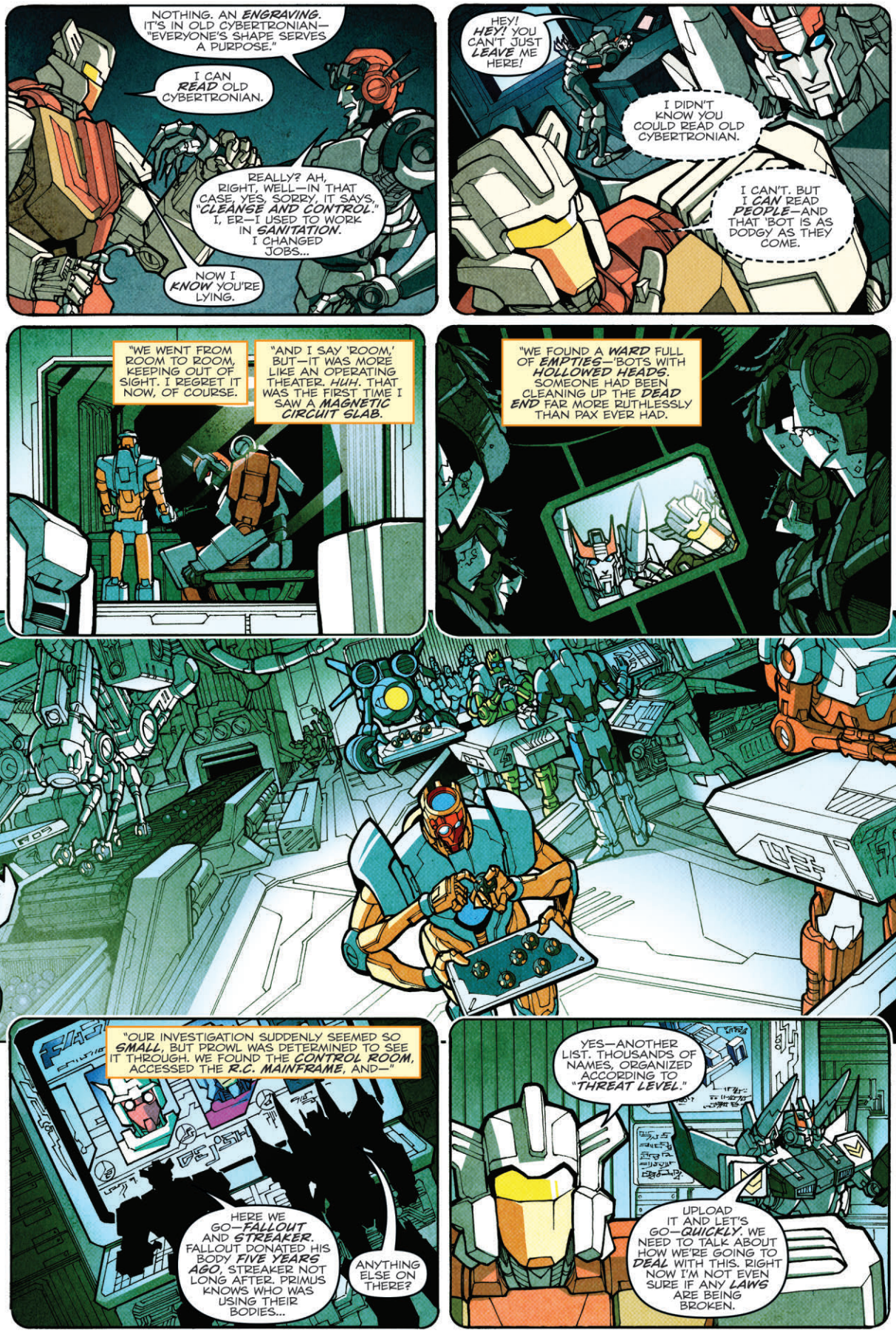

A CELLMATE—ONE OF MY OLD HANDLERS.
HE MUST HAVE FRIENDS IN VERY HIGH PLACES, BECAUSE HE ARRIVED YESTERDAY AND LEFT THIS MORNING. AND AS HE WENT, HE SAID:
IT'S ALL GONNA KICK OFF. YOU'LL SEE. BEFORE THE WEEK IS OUT, PROTEUS WILL BREAK HIS PROMISE AND SENTINEL WILL MAKE HIS MOVE.
THAT ALL HE SAID?
FREE IN 63!
WRECK 'N' RULE
NO. HE MENTIONED A BOMB—"A BOMB SO BIG IT'LL TAKE THE NAME OF THE CITY IT DESTROYS." HE SAID IT WOULD BE HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT.
THAT'S ALL—I HOPE IT'S ENOUGH.
I'VE MISJUDGED YOU.
I NEVER HAD YOU PEGGED AS A STRAIGHTFORWARD CRIMINAL—I KNEW YOU AND THE SENATE HAD HISTORY JUST BY LOOKING AT YOU—BUT I UNDERESTIMATED YOUR COMPASSION.
NO, YOU UNDERESTIMATED MY THIRST FOR REVENGE.
THE SENATE MUTILATED ME, GOT ME TO DO THEIR DIRTY WORK, AND ABANDONED ME. I WANT YOU TO HURT THEM. I WANT YOU TO CRUSH THEM. I WANT—
—I WANT—
I WANT MY HANDS BACK.
"PAX GAVE ME SOME FLANNEL ABOUT KEEPING IN TOUCH AND LEFT. TWO MINUTES LATER I HEARD THE DOOR OPEN."
HEY, FINGERS...
...MEET YOUR NEW CELLMATE.
IMPACTOR?!
IMPACTOR WAS YOUR CELLMATE?! THAT'S HOW YOU MET?!
AND—AND I BET HE PROMPTLY ADDED YOUR NAME TO THE LIST OF WARRIORS WHO WOULD ONE DAY BECOME... THE WRECKERS!
NO—HE PROMPTLY BEAT ME TO THE BRINK OF FADE-OUT AND LEFT ME IN A CRITICAL CONDITION—AND YEARS LATER WE MET AGAIN.

BUT THAT'S A WHOLE OTHER STORY.
SORRY— ALWAYS WANTED TO SAY THAT. THAT, AND "IMPOSSIBLE! OUR LASERFIRE IS JUST MAKING HIM STRONGER!"
-AHEM-
GO ON...
SO—HERE I'M MAKING A BIT OF A LEAP. ALL I KNOW IS THAT HALF AN HOUR AFTER PAX LEAVES WHIRL'S CELL—
(COME ON, RUNG, GIVE ME A SIGN)
—ROLLER AND RATCHET PITCH UP AT THE ACADEMY OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY. THEIR ARRIVAL CAPTURED ON THE ACADEMY'S SECURITY CAMERAS.
RATCHET?
I'M SORRY TO HAVE TO DO THIS, SENATOR...
...BUT ORION SAID YOU'D REFUSE TO COME WITH US.
REC.
YOU'RE ARRESTING ME IN FRONT OF MY STAFF?! DO YOU REALIZE HOW THIS LOOKS?!
WE'RE NOT ARRESTING YOU, WE'RE JUST... EXPEDITING YOUR DEPARTURE.
IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. ORION THINKS YOU'D BE SAFER BACK AT THE STATION.
LEAVE HIM ALONE!
YOU STARTING SOMETHING, BUDDY?
I—
NO. NOT AT ALL, OFFICER.
SUCH A WUSS.
WHAT, YOU THINK I SHOULD'VE LET LOOSE WITH MY LETHAL TRAINEE THEORITICIAN MOVES?
YOU'VE GOT SOME PRETTY COOL MOVES COMING UP, SKIDS.
BUT NOT BEFORE CHROMEDOME TELLS US ABOUT HIS VISIT TO A DOWNTOWN RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC...

"PAX HAD ASKED US TO VISIT THE R.C. WHILE HE WENT TO LUNA 2—EN ROUTE, WE RAN ACROSS A GROUP OF DECEPTICONS PROTESTING AGAINST THE REGISTRATION ACT."
YOU ARE BEING DECEIVED
RESIST THE CLAMP
THE SENATE USED TO BLAME US FOR EVERY TERRORIST ATTACK THIS SIDE OF NOVA PEAK!
AND NOW—SUDDENLY—WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE D.R.A., PROTEUS SAYS HE'S PREPARED TO ENGAGE WITH US?
I SAY NO! IT'S NOTHING BUT A PLOY TO KEEP US DISTRACTED—TO MAKE SURE WE PLAY AT BEING GOOD LITTLE CITIZENS.
DOWN WITH THE D.R.A.
FORM DICTATES FUNCTION DICTATES FATE
HE HAS NO INTENTION—NONE WHATSOEVER—OF KEEPING HIS PROMISE! WHY? BECAUSE HE HATES US! HE FEARS US!
IF PROTEUS TRULY BELIEVED THAT OUR VOICES DESERVED TO BE HEARD, HE'D GRANT US PARTY POLITICAL STATUS WITH A WAVE OF HIS HAND—INSTEAD, HE SETS SOME ARBITRARY QUOTA!
EVER WONDER WHERE THIS IS ALL HEADING?
WHO DOESN'T?
THE NEWSFEED SERVICE SAYS THERE'S A DECEPTICON PRESENCE IN EVERY GEOSECTOR NOW. I DON'T KNOW, THAT SOUNDS—
I DON'T KNOW.
I HAVE A FRIEND—A HOSTAGE NEGOTIATIOR—WHO SAYS THE DECEPTICON MOVEMENT IS ATTRACTING EVERYONE FROM THE CYBERUTOPIANS TO THE ANTI-VOCATIONIST LEAGUE...
YOU SEND OUT A MESSAGE, YOU CAN'T CONTROL WHO HEARS IT...
THAT'S JUST IT—MY FRIEND THINKS IT'S ALL ABOUT JOB EMANCIPATION, BUT I THINK IT'S MORE THAN THAT. I THINK THIS IS ABOUT A NEW WORLD ORDER.
IF THE SENATE KEEPS TIGHTENING THE CLAMPDOWN AND THE DECEPTICON MOVEMENT KEEPS GROWING, WE COULD BE LOOKING AT A FULL-BLOWN INSURGENCY.
I'M NOT—YOU'LL SAY I'M BEING ALARMIST, BUT I CAN SEE IT HAPPENING.
THIS CAN BE DEFUSED. TRUST ME.

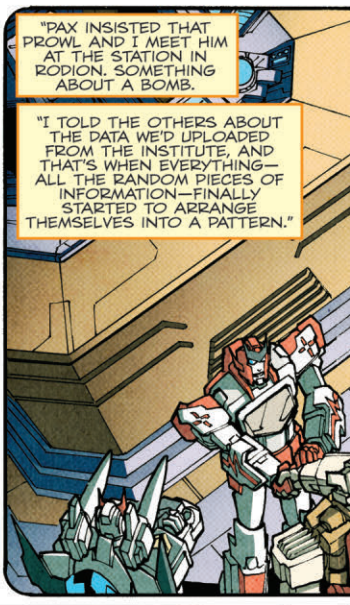

BUT IF WE DID GO TO WAR—WOULD YOU FIGHT?
YES, BUT IF IT DID.
IT WON'T COME TO—
IF IT DID, I'D LEAVE. I HAVE NO WISH TO LIVE AMONGST CHAOS.
YOU'D LEAVE CYBERTRON? WHAT ABOUT ME?
...
I ASSUMED YOU'D COME WITH ME.
"WE DON'T NEED ANY OF THIS."
I WAS JUST—
IT'S PADDING! IT'S NOT EVEN RELEVANT!
"JUST GET TO THE CLINIC..."
RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC
"THE WAITING ROOM SMELT OF RUSTWASH AND SOUR ENERGON AND IT MADE ME FEEL FLAT. AT LEAST WE HAD THE VIDEOPANE TO DISTRACT US..."
IN BREAKING NEWS, WE CAN REPORT THAT THE DECEPTICON MOVEMENT HAS BEEN CLEARED OF ANY INVOLVEMENT IN THE MURDERS OF SENATORS SHERMA AND MOMUS.
THE HEAD OF THE I.M.D.* FLATFOOT OF POLYHEX MINOR, HAS IN THE PAST FEW MINUTES CONFIRMED THAT THE KILLINGS WERE CARRIED OUT BY TWO PRO-FUNCTIONIST AGITANTS, BOTH OF WHOM WERE KILLED TRYING TO ESCAPE I.M.D. INVESTIGATORS. MORE ON THIS STORY AS IT DEVELOPS...
DONORS WANTED TOP PRICES PAID FOR DUOCOMBINERS
ASK US ABOUT OUR AERIAL ALTMODES
*IACONIAN MECHAFORENSIC DIVISION
WHAT?!
I SAID EXPLICITLY THAT IT WAS A PRELIMINARY REPORT! PRE-LIM-IN-ARY! AS IN NOT THE FINAL VERSION! WHY IN THE NAME OF WARRIOR'S GATE HAS FLATFOOT DECIDED TO—
SHHH— WE'VE GOT COMPANY.
YOU MUST BE TREPAN.
SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING.
IF YOU'RE HERE ABOUT THE SPECIAL OFFER ON TRIPLE-CHANGERS, I'M AFRAID THEY'RE ALL ON LOAN AT THE MOMENT.

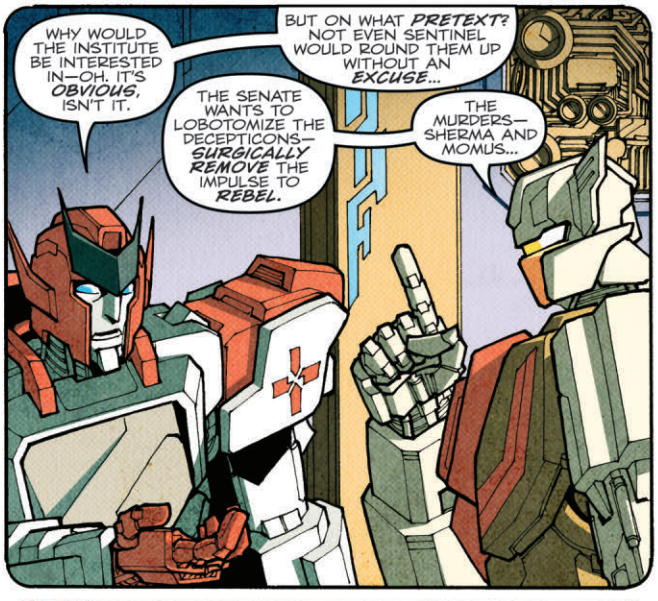

INTERESTING HAND YOU'VE GOT THERE...
SORRY—YES—I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING.
SIR, WE'RE FROM THE I.M.D. WE'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THESE TWO INDIVIDUALS. WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THEY MIGHT'VE BEEN DONORS...
I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE.
TAKE A GOOD LOOK.
WHAT'S THIS ON YOUR WRIST?
"IT DIDN'T TAKE US LONG TO SCOPE OUT THE CLINIC—WE FOUND THE USUAL PARAPHERNALIA: SPARK EXTRACTION EQUIPMENT, WHITEOUT VACUUMS, AND SO ON.
"AND THEN WE FOUND SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING UNDERNEATH THE CLINIC. A HIDDEN FACILITY."
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
BEATS ME—BUT I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THOSE DIRECTIONS.
DESTABILIZATION CENTER
MODIFICATION WARD
PHOBIA CONTROL
"BUT WHAT WE FOUND NEXT WAS PARTICULARLY DISTURBING...
"...DOZENS OF CEREBROSCIENTISTS TENDING TO HUNDREDS OF BRAIN MODULES—PROBING THEM—UNPEELING THEM—AND IT WAS ONLY THEN THAT I REALIZED WHERE WE WERE."
THE INSTITUTE? YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.
COME ON—IF YOU HAD TO DESIGN A FACILITY DEDICATED TO BRAINWASHING—TO REWRITING YOUR PERSONALITY—IT WOULD LOOK EXACTLY LIKE THIS!
YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT STATE-SPONSORED MENTICIDE. EVEN IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TECHNOLOGICALLY—
IT IS! THEY ISOLATE THE CENTERS OF MEMORY AND EMOTION IN YOUR BRAIN, REMOVE EVERYTHING THAT DEFINES YOU, AND IMPLANT NEW PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR.
IT'S A FORBIDDEN SCIENCE—IT HASN'T GOT A PROPER NAME. THEY JUST CALL IT SHADOWPLAY.


NOTHING. AN ENGRAVING. IT'S IN OLD CYBERTRONIAN—"EVERYONE'S SHAPE SERVES A PURPOSE."
I CAN READ OLD CYBERTRONIAN.
REALLY? AH, RIGHT, WELL—IN THAT CASE, YES, SORRY, IT SAYS, "CLEANSE AND CONTROL." I, ER—I USED TO WORK IN SANITATION. I CHANGED JOBS...
NOW I KNOW YOU'RE LYING.
HEY! HEY! YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE ME HERE!
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD READ OLD CYBERTRONIAN.
I CAN'T. BUT I CAN READ PEOPLE—AND THAT 'BOT IS AS DODGY AS THEY COME.
"WE WENT FROM ROOM TO ROOM, KEEPING OUT OF SIGHT. I REGRET IT NOW, OF COURSE.
"AND I SAY 'ROOM,' BUT—IT WAS MORE LIKE AN OPERATING THEATER. HUH. THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I SAW A MAGNETIC CIRCUIT SLAB.
"WE FOUND A WARD FULL OF EMPTIES—'BOTS WITH HOLLOWED HEADS. SOMEONE HAD BEEN CLEANING UP THE DEAD END FAR MORE RUTHLESSLY THAN PAX EVER HAD.
"OUR INVESTIGATION SUDDENLY SEEMED SO SMALL, BUT PROWL WAS DETERMINED TO SEE IT THROUGH. WE FOUND THE CONTROL ROOM, ACCESSED THE R.C. MAINFRAME, AND—"
HERE WE GO—FALLOUT AND STREAKER. FALLOUT DONATED HIS BODY FIVE YEARS AGO, STREAKER NOT LONG AFTER. PRIMUS KNOWS WHO WAS USING THEIR BODIES...
ANYTHING ELSE ON THERE?
YES—ANOTHER LIST. THOUSANDS OF NAMES, ORGANIZED ACCORDING TO "THREAT LEVEL."
UPLOAD IT AND LET'S GO—QUICKLY. WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT HOW WE'RE GOING TO DEAL WITH THIS. RIGHT NOW I'M NOT EVEN SURE IF ANY LAWS ARE BEING BROKEN.

WE WENT BACK UPSTAIRS TO FIND TREPAN HAD ESCAPED. IT WOULDN'T BE THE LAST TIME WE SAW HIM.
BUT THAT'S ANOTHER—
SHUT UP, SWERVE.
PROWL WAS JUST TALKING ME OUT OF ISSUING AN ARREST WARRANT—HE WAS ALL "I NEED TO THINK!"—WHEN WE GOT A CALL FROM PAX.

RATCHET, FEEL FREE TO COME IN HERE TOO. I KNOW HOW THIS ALL PLAYS OUT, BUT FROM NOW UNTIL THE EXPLOSION I'M PRETTY MUCH RELYING ON CONVERSATIONS I HAD WITH OPTIMUS.
I WANTED TO WRITE HIS WAR MEMOIRS. STILL DO, ACTUALLY. ANYWAY—CHROMEDOME...
CONVERSATIONS?

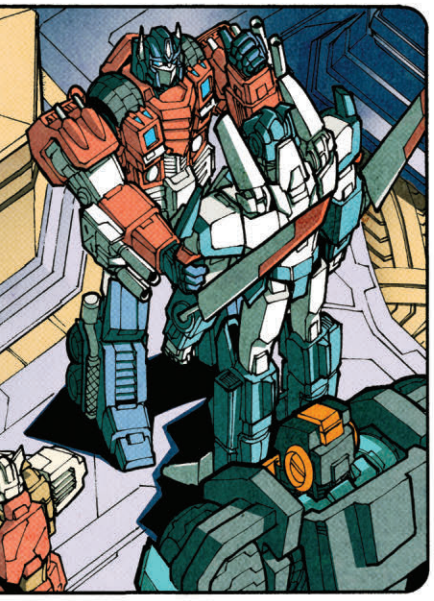

"PAX INSISTED THAT PROWL AND I MEET HIM AT THE STATION IN RODION. SOMETHING ABOUT A BOMB.
"I TOLD THE OTHERS ABOUT THE DATA WE'D UPLOADED FROM THE INSTITUTE, AND THAT'S WHEN EVERYTHING—ALL THE RANDOM PIECES OF INFORMATION—FINALLY STARTED TO ARRANGE THEMSELVES INTO A PATTERN."


WHY WOULD THE INSTITUTE BE INTERESTED IN—OH. IT'S OBVIOUS, ISN'T IT.
BUT ON WHAT PRETEXT? NOT EVEN SENTINEL WOULD ROUND THEM UP WITHOUT AN EXCUSE...
THE SENATE WANTS TO LOBOTOMIZE THE DECEPTICONS—SURGICALLY REMOVE THE IMPULSE TO REBEL.
THE MURDERS—SHERMA AND MOMUS...

TOO SMALL. BESIDES, WHY WOULD THEY BE KILLED BEFORE REGISTRATION HAD CLOSED? IT'S IN HIS INTEREST TO GET AS MANY AS POSSIBLE TO REGISTER.
OKAY, I LIKE A GOOD CONSPIRACY AS MUCH AS THE NEXT 'BOT, BUT THIS IS WHERE ME AND THIS CONVERSATION PART COMPANY.

THAT'S WHY FLATFOOT WAS SO QUICK TO SEND YOUR PRELIMINARY REPORT TO THE SENATE...
FLATFOOT'S IN ON THIS TOO?! OF COURSE! WHY NOT?
PROWL—THEY EXPECTED YOU TO COMMISSION AN AUTOPSY. THEY KNEW IT WOULD LEAD US TO TRANSLUCENTICA...

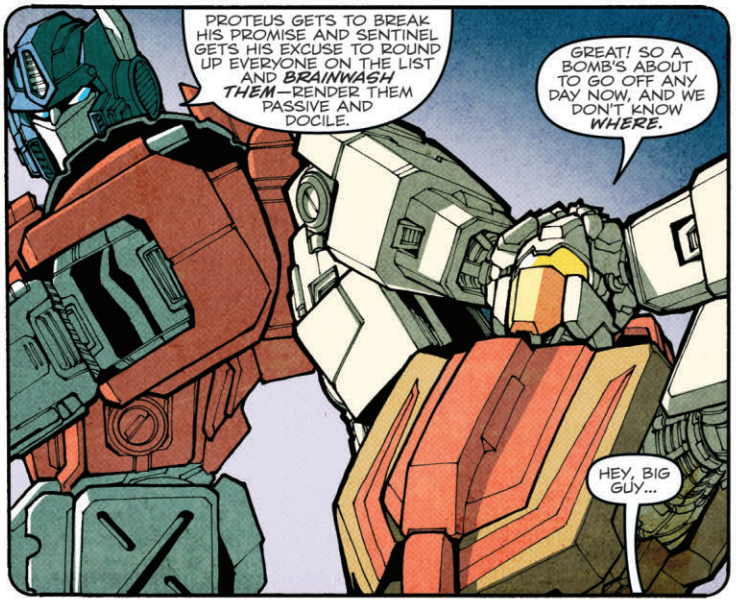
HANG ON. IF ENOUGH DECEPTICONS REGISTER, THEN PROTEUS IS OBLIGED TO MAKE THEM A POLITICAL PARTY.
NOT IF THEY SHOW THEIR "TRUE COLORS."
THE BOMB THAT WHIRL MENTIONED—PROTEUS IS GOING TO BLAME THAT ON THE DECEPTICONS!



THAT'S IT—THAT'S THE LIST.
THE LIST?
THE DECEPTICON REGISTRATION ACT—THAT'S THE LIST OF REGISTRANTS. I RECOGNIZE SOME OF THE NAMES.

WAIT—JUST GIVE ME A SECOND TO—
OKAY. LET'S SAY THE D.R.A. IS THE SENATE'S WAY OF FLUSHING OUT THE ENEMY. BUT THE DECEPTICONS DON'T TRUST THE SENATE—WHY WOULD THEY, AFTER ALL THE PROPAGANDA?—SO REGISTRATION IS POOR.

PROTEUS STARTS TO PANIC—HE ONLY GETS ONE SHOT AT THIS. HE ARRANGES FOR SHERMA AND MOMUS TO BE MURDERED, KNOWING THAT THE DECEPTICONS WILL EXPECT THE SENATE TO BLAME THEM.
INSTEAD, BY REFUSING TO JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS, HE CAN USE THE DEATHS TO DEMONSTRATE HIS EVENHANDEDNESS—AND CONVINCE THE SKEPTICS THAT HE'S NO LONGER ANTI-DECEPTICON.
BUT HE NEEDS THE MURDER INVESTIGATION TO BE ABOVE BOARD, SO HE MAKES SURE THE TASK OF FINDING OUT THE "TRUTH" IS GIVEN TO A PAIR OF SCRUPULOUS INVESTIGATORS.
WHEN THE DECEPTICONS ARE CLEARED OF ANY WRONGDOING, PROTEUS LOOKS LIKE A MODEL OF PROBITY. THE RESULT: A LAST-MINUTE SURGE IN REGISTRANTS.


PROTEUS GETS TO BREAK HIS PROMISE AND SENTINEL GETS HIS EXCUSE TO ROUND UP EVERYONE ON THE LIST AND BRAINWASH THEM—RENDER THEM PASSIVE AND DOCILE.
GREAT! SO A BOMB'S ABOUT TO GO OFF ANY DAY NOW, AND WE DON'T KNOW WHERE.
HEY, BIG GUY...

...CHECK THIS OUT.
—EXCLUSIVE FOOTAGE OF NOMINUS PRIME'S BODY BEING LAID IN THE PRIMAL BASILICA. TOMORROW, THE FIRST OF AN ESTIMATED MILLION MOURNERS WILL VIEW HIS CORPSE.
FOR MANY, IT WILL BE THE FIRST TIME THEY HAVE SEEN THE MATRIX UP CLOSE.

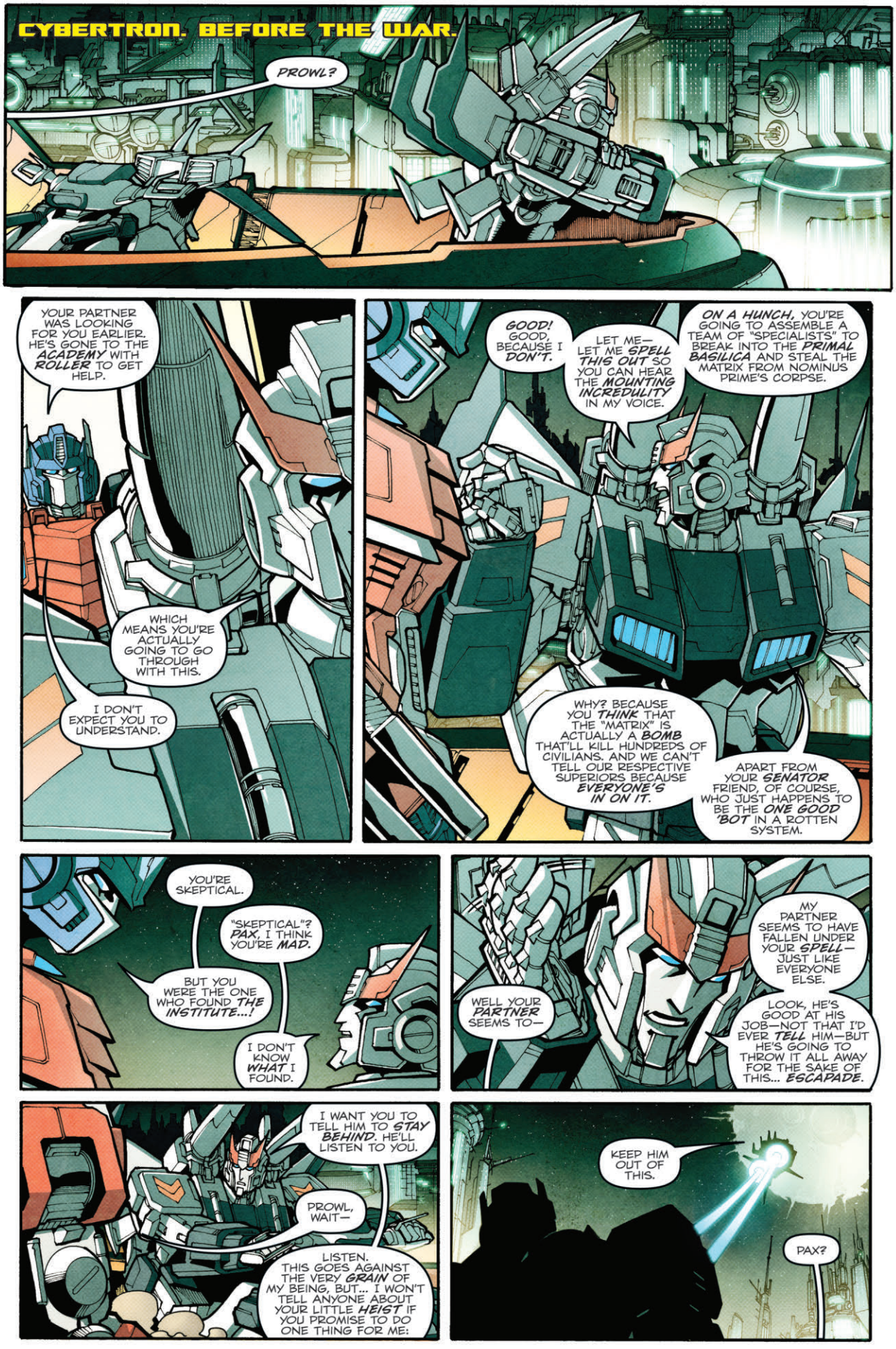
THE MATRIX—THE FAKE MATRIX—THEY'VE TURNED IT INTO A BOMB. A BOMB THAT'LL KILL THOUSANDS AND DESECRATE A RELIGIOUS LANDMARK—
THE ULTIMATE ACT OF PROVOCATION.
WE HAVE TO STOP IT.
HOW? WE CAN'T TELL THE SENATE, WE CAN'T TELL MECHAFORENSICS—WE CAN'T TRUST ANYONE.
WE HAVE TO HANDLE THIS OURSELVES. WE HAVE TO NEUTRALIZE THE THREAT.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M SAYING...
...WE HAVE TO STEAL THE MATRIX.

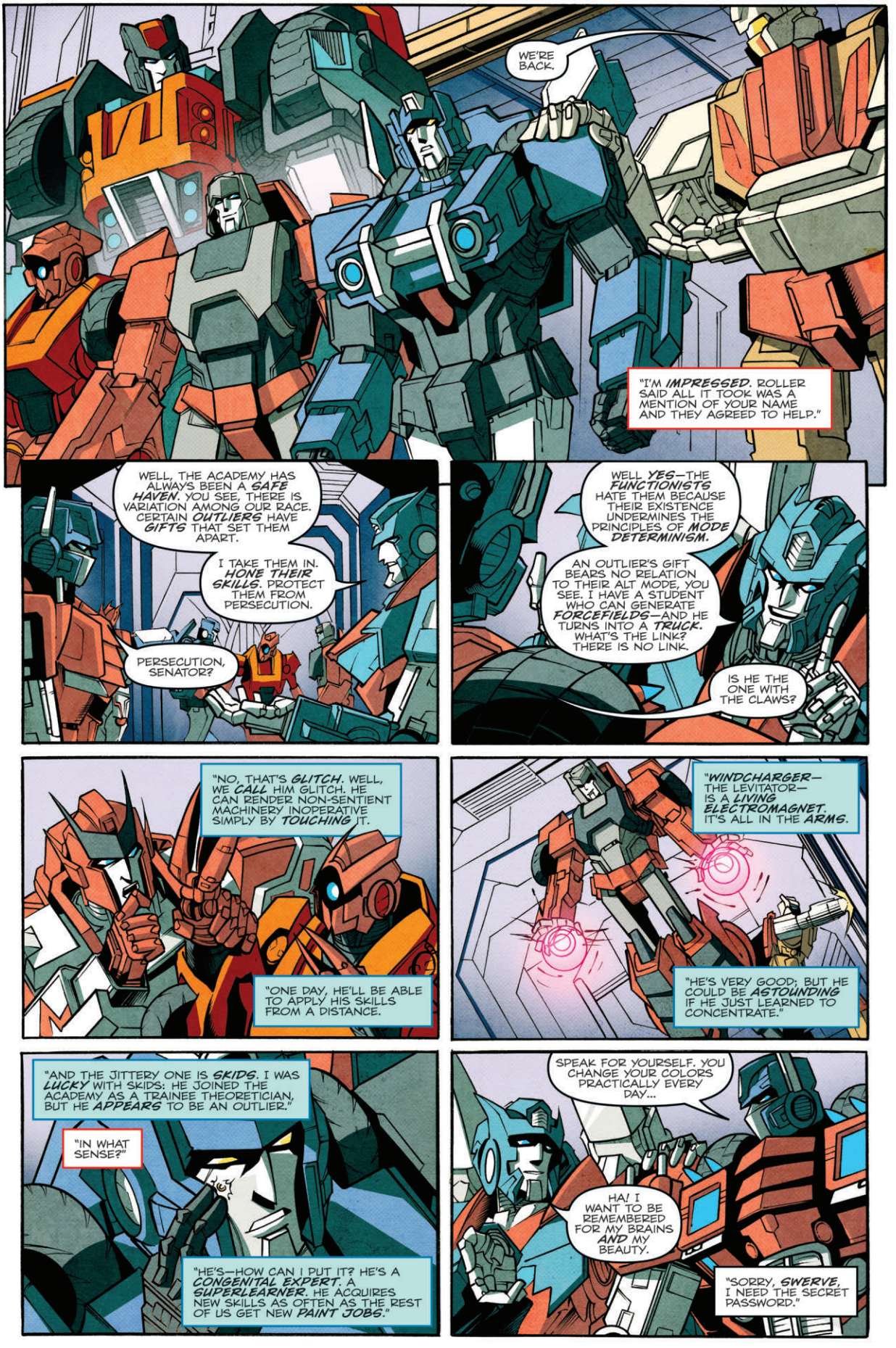
☐ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #10 COVER B

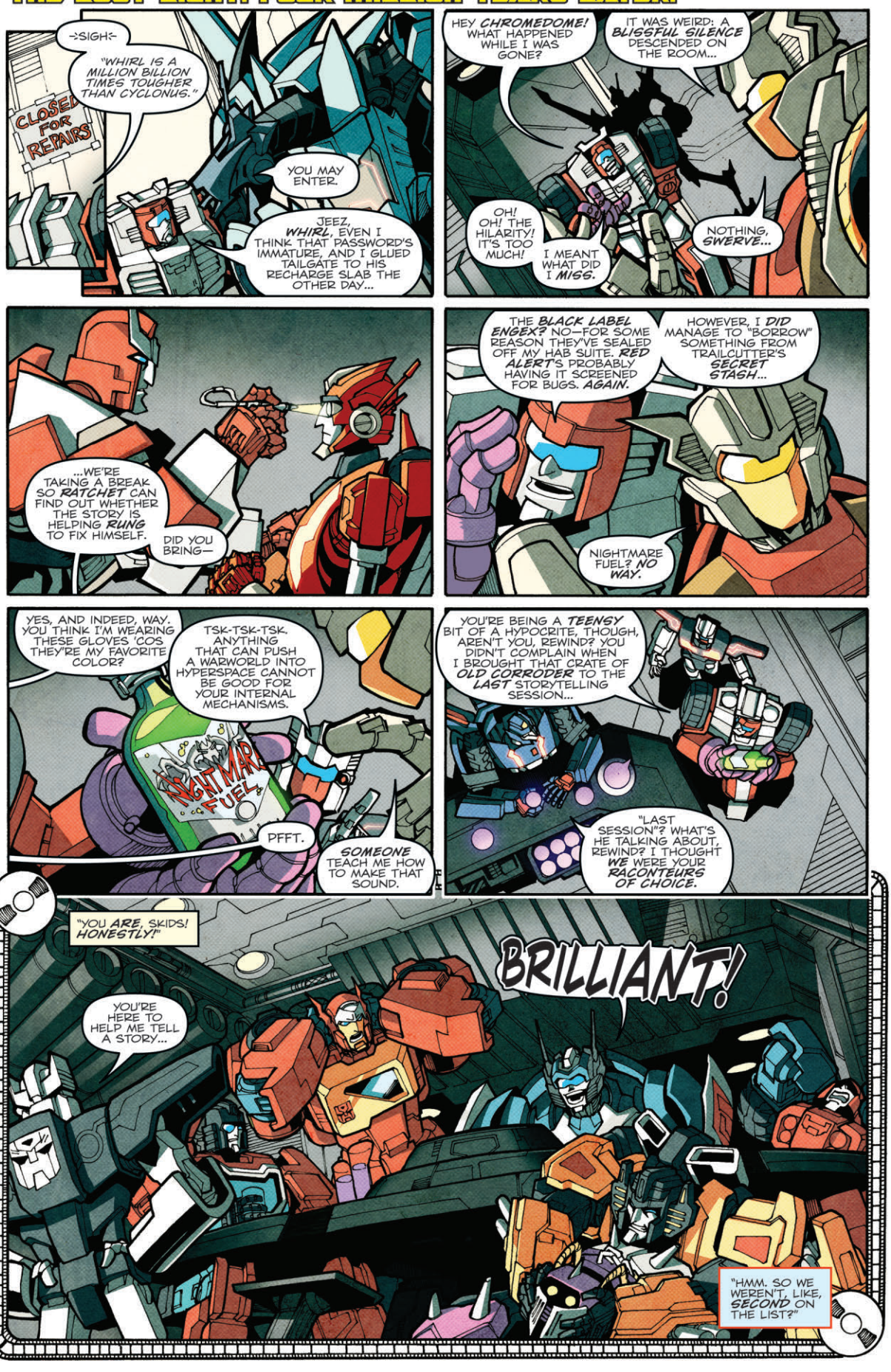
by **CASEY COLLER** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**

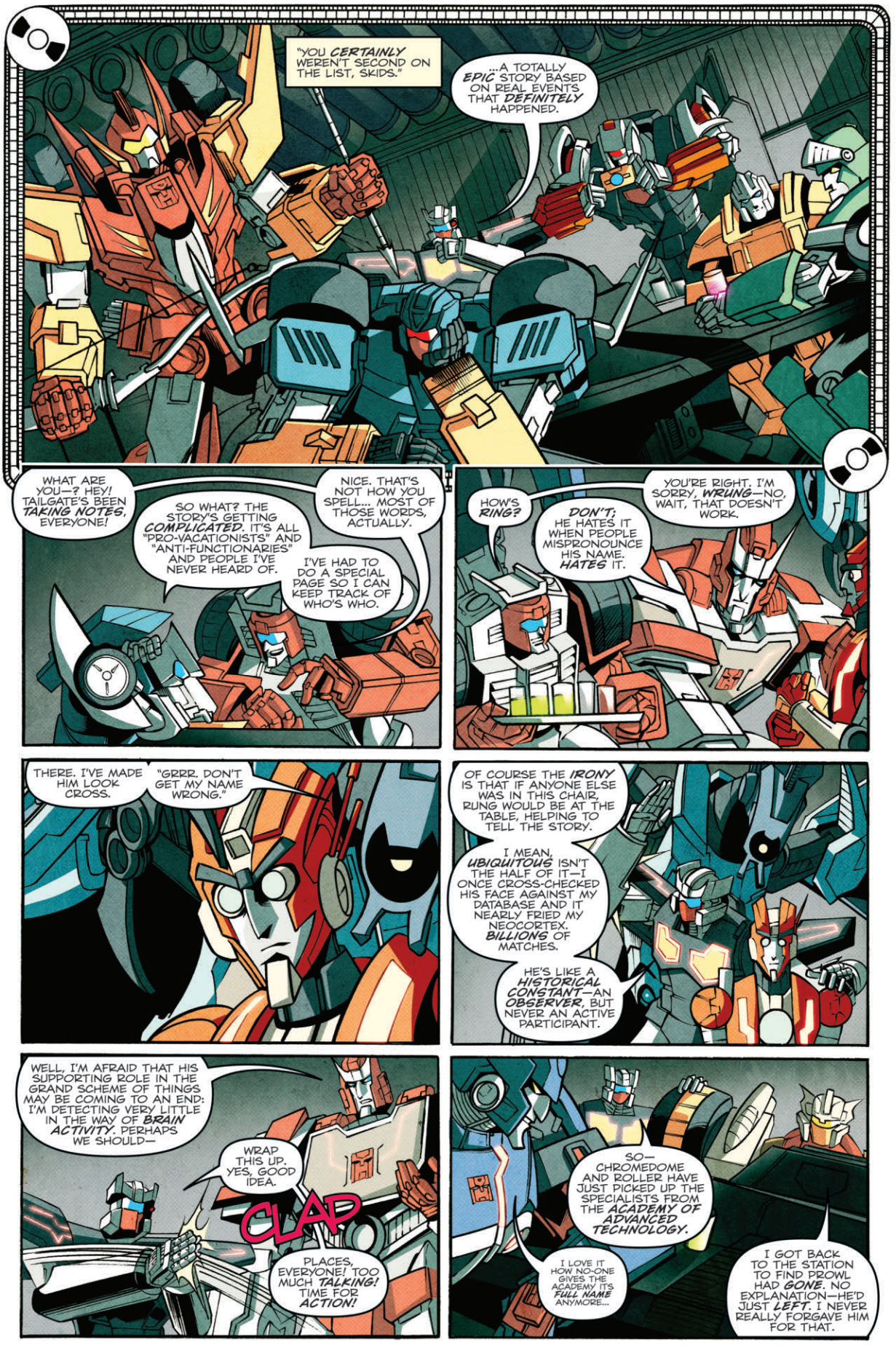
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #11 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

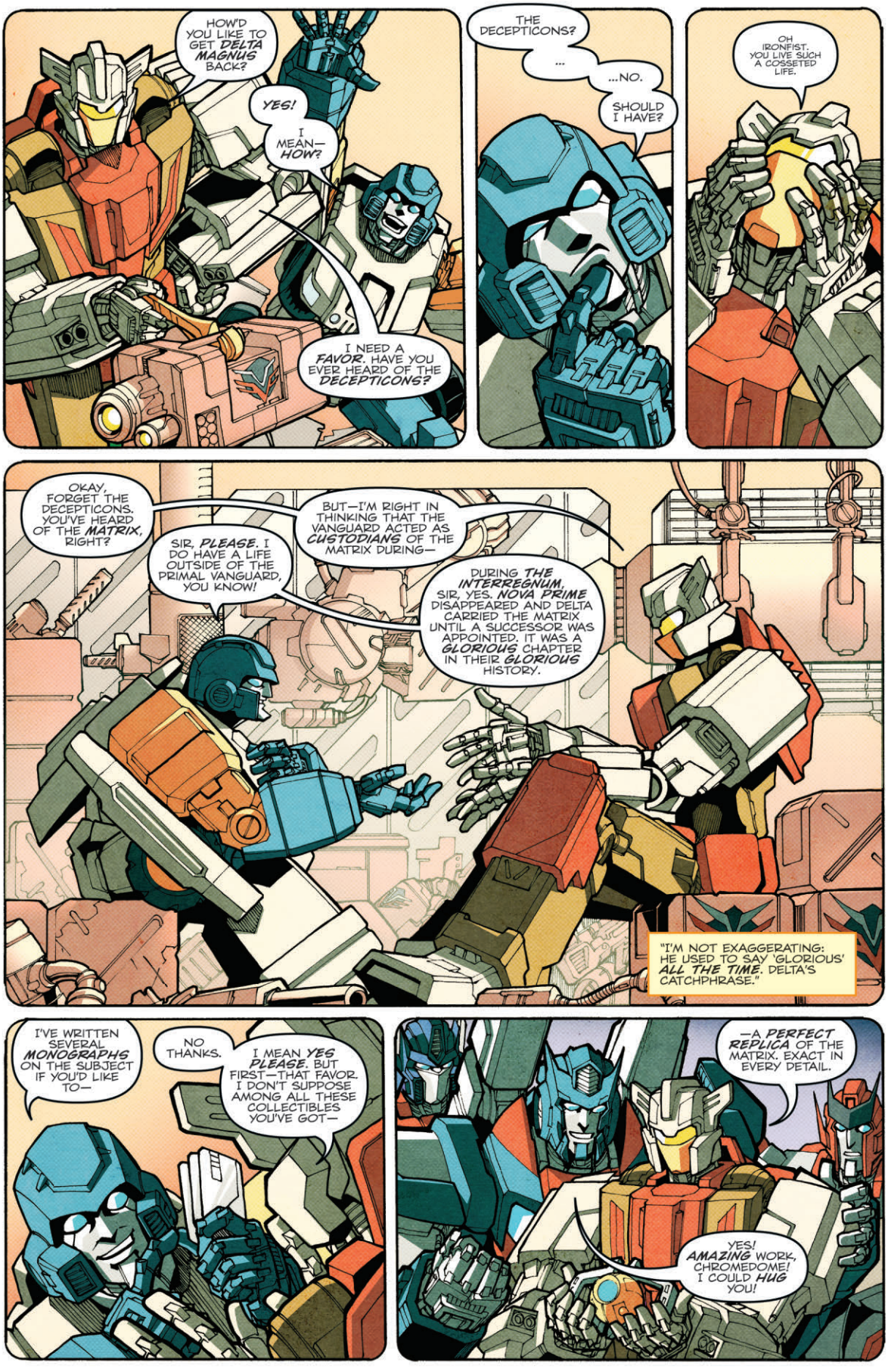

CYBERTRON. BEFORE THE WAR.
PROWL?
YOUR PARTNER WAS LOOKING FOR YOU EARLIER. HE'S GONE TO THE ACADEMY WITH ROLLER TO GET HELP.
WHICH MEANS YOU'RE ACTUALLY GOING TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS.
I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND.
GOOD! GOOD, BECAUSE I DON'T.
LET ME— LET ME SPELL THIS OUT SO YOU CAN HEAR THE MOUNTING INCREDULITY IN MY VOICE.
ON A HUNCH, YOU'RE GOING TO ASSEMBLE A TEAM OF "SPECIALISTS" TO BREAK INTO THE PRIMAL BASILICA AND STEAL THE MATRIX FROM NOMINUS PRIME'S CORPSE.
WHY? BECAUSE YOU THINK THAT THE "MATRIX" IS ACTUALLY A BOMB THAT'LL KILL HUNDREDS OF CIVILIANS. AND WE CAN'T TELL OUR RESPECTIVE SUPERIORS BECAUSE EVERYONE'S IN ON IT.
APART FROM YOUR SENATOR FRIEND, OF COURSE, WHO JUST HAPPENS TO BE THE ONE GOOD 'BOT IN A ROTTEN SYSTEM.
YOU'RE SKEPTICAL.
"SKEPTICAL"? PAX, I THINK YOU'RE MAD.
BUT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO FOUND THE INSTITUTE...!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I FOUND.
WELL YOUR PARTNER SEEMS TO—
MY PARTNER SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN UNDER YOUR SPELL— JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.
LOOK, HE'S GOOD AT HIS JOB—NOT THAT I'D EVER TELL HIM—BUT HE'S GOING TO THROW IT ALL AWAY FOR THE SAKE OF THIS... ESCAPADE.
I WANT YOU TO TELL HIM TO STAY BEHIND. HE'LL LISTEN TO YOU.
PROWL, WAIT—
LISTEN. THIS GOES AGAINST THE VERY GRAIN OF MY BEING, BUT... I WON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT YOUR LITTLE HEIST IF YOU PROMISE TO DO ONE THING FOR ME:
KEEP HIM OUT OF THIS.
PAX?

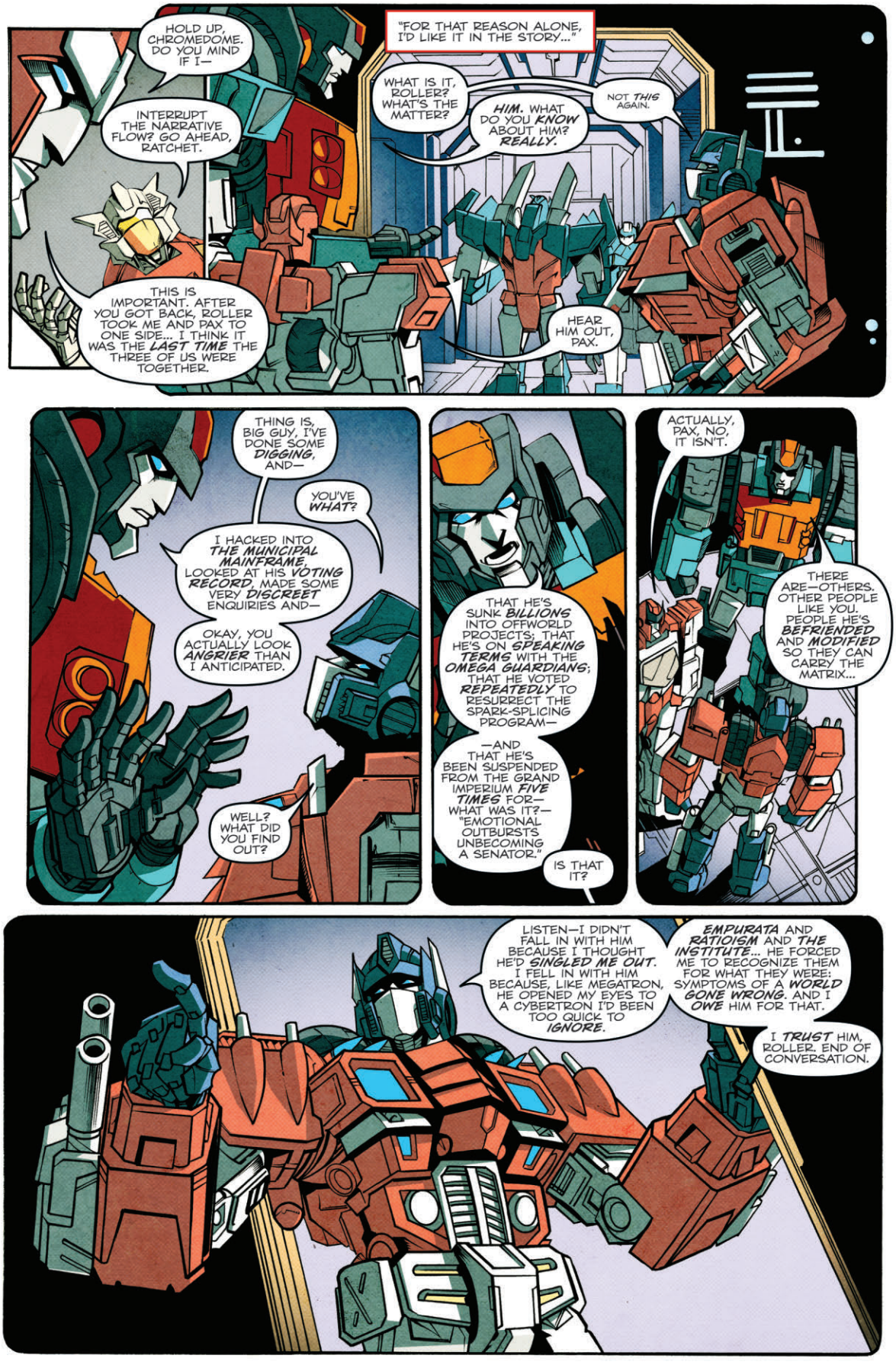

WE'RE BACK.
"I'M IMPRESSED. ROLLER SAID ALL IT TOOK WAS A MENTION OF YOUR NAME AND THEY AGREED TO HELP."
WELL, THE ACADEMY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SAFE HAVEN. YOU SEE, THERE IS VARIATION AMONG OUR RACE. CERTAIN OUTLIERS HAVE GIFTS THAT SET THEM APART.
I TAKE THEM IN. HONE THEIR SKILLS. PROTECT THEM FROM PERSECUTION.
PERSECUTION, SENATOR?
WELL YES—THE FUNCTIONISTS HATE THEM BECAUSE THEIR EXISTENCE UNDERMINES THE PRINCIPLES OF MODE DETERMINISM.
AN OUTLIER'S GIFT BEARS NO RELATION TO THEIR ALT MODE, YOU SEE. I HAVE A STUDENT WHO CAN GENERATE FORCEFIELDS—AND HE TURNS INTO A TRUCK. WHAT'S THE LINK? THERE IS NO LINK.
IS HE THE ONE WITH THE CLAWS?
"NO, THAT'S GLITCH. WELL, WE CALL HIM GLITCH. HE CAN RENDER NON-SENTIENT MACHINERY INOPERATIVE SIMPLY BY TOUCHING IT.
"ONE DAY, HE'LL BE ABLE TO APPLY HIS SKILLS FROM A DISTANCE.
"WINDCHARGER—THE LEVITATOR—IS A LIVING ELECTROMAGNET. IT'S ALL IN THE ARMS.
"HE'S VERY GOOD; BUT HE COULD BE ASTOUNDING IF HE JUST LEARNED TO CONCENTRATE."
"AND THE JITTERY ONE IS SKIDS. I WAS LUCKY WITH SKIDS: HE JOINED THE ACADEMY AS A TRAINEE THEORETICIAN, BUT HE APPEARS TO BE AN OUTLIER."
"IN WHAT SENSE?"
"HE'S—HOW CAN I PUT IT? HE'S A CONGENITAL EXPERT. A SUPERLEARNER. HE ACQUIRES NEW SKILLS AS OFTEN AS THE REST OF US GET NEW PAINT JOBS."
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF. YOU CHANGE YOUR COLORS PRACTICALLY EVERY DAY...
HA! I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED FOR MY BRAINS AND MY BEAUTY.
"SORRY, SWERVE, I NEED THE SECRET PASSWORD."

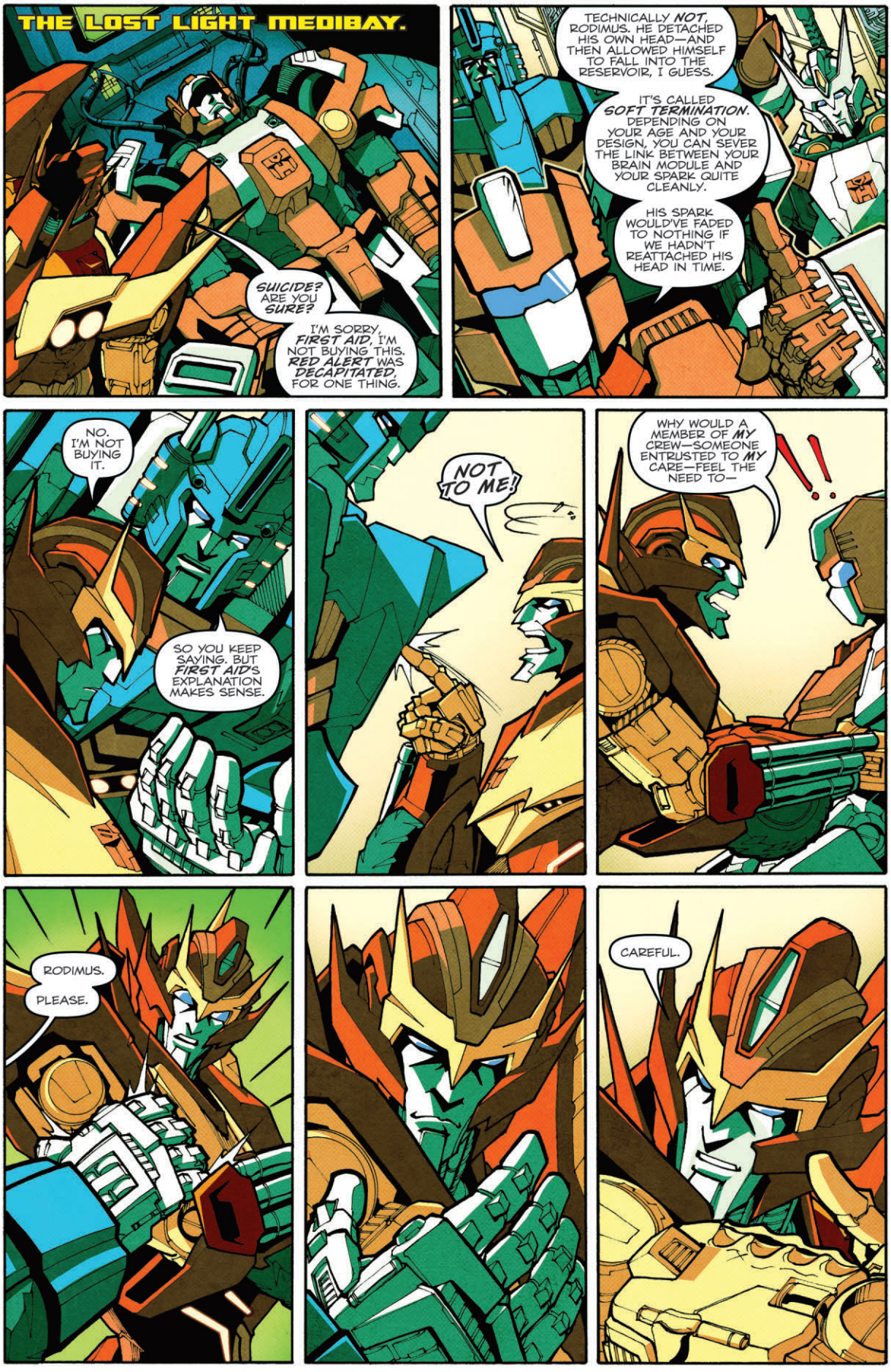

THE LOST LIGHT. FOUR MILLION YEARS LATER.
-SIGH-
"WHIRL IS A MILLION BILLION TIMES TOUGHER THAN CYCLONUS."
CLOSED FOR REPAIRS
YOU MAY ENTER.
JEEZ, WHIRL, EVEN I THINK THAT PASSWORD'S IMMATURE, AND I GLUED TAILGATE TO HIS RECHARGE SLAB THE OTHER DAY...
HEY CHROMEDOME! WHAT HAPPENED WHILE I WAS GONE?
IT WAS WEIRD: A BLISSFUL SILENCE DESCENDED ON THE ROOM...
OH! OH! THE HILARITY! IT'S TOO MUCH!
I MEANT WHAT DID I MISS.
NOTHING, SWERVE...
...WE'RE TAKING A BREAK SO RATCHET CAN FIND OUT WHETHER THE STORY IS HELPING RUNG TO FIX HIMSELF.
DID YOU BRING—
THE BLACK LABEL ENGEX? NO—FOR SOME REASON THEY'VE SEALED OFF MY HAB SUITE. RED ALERT'S PROBABLY HAVING IT SCREENED FOR BUGS. AGAIN.
HOWEVER, I DID MANAGE TO "BORROW" SOMETHING FROM TRAILCUTTER'S SECRET STASH...
NIGHTMARE FUEL? NO WAY.
YES, AND INDEED, WAY. YOU THINK I'M WEARING THESE GLOVES 'COS THEY'RE MY FAVORITE COLOR?
TSK-TSK-TSK. ANYTHING THAT CAN PUSH A WARWORLD INTO HYPERSPACE CANNOT BE GOOD FOR YOUR INTERNAL MECHANISMS.
NIGHTMARE FUEL
PFFT.
SOMEONE TEACH ME HOW TO MAKE THAT SOUND.
YOU'RE BEING A TEENSY BIT OF A HYPOCRITE, THOUGH, AREN'T YOU, REWIND? YOU DIDN'T COMPLAIN WHEN I BROUGHT THAT CRATE OF OLD CORRODER TO THE LAST STORYTELLING SESSION...
"LAST SESSION"? WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT, REWIND? I THOUGHT WE WERE YOUR RACONTEURS OF CHOICE.
"YOU ARE, SKIDS! HONESTLY!"
YOU'RE HERE TO HELP ME TELL A STORY...
BRILLIANT!
"HMM. SO WE WEREN'T, LIKE, SECOND ON THE LIST?"

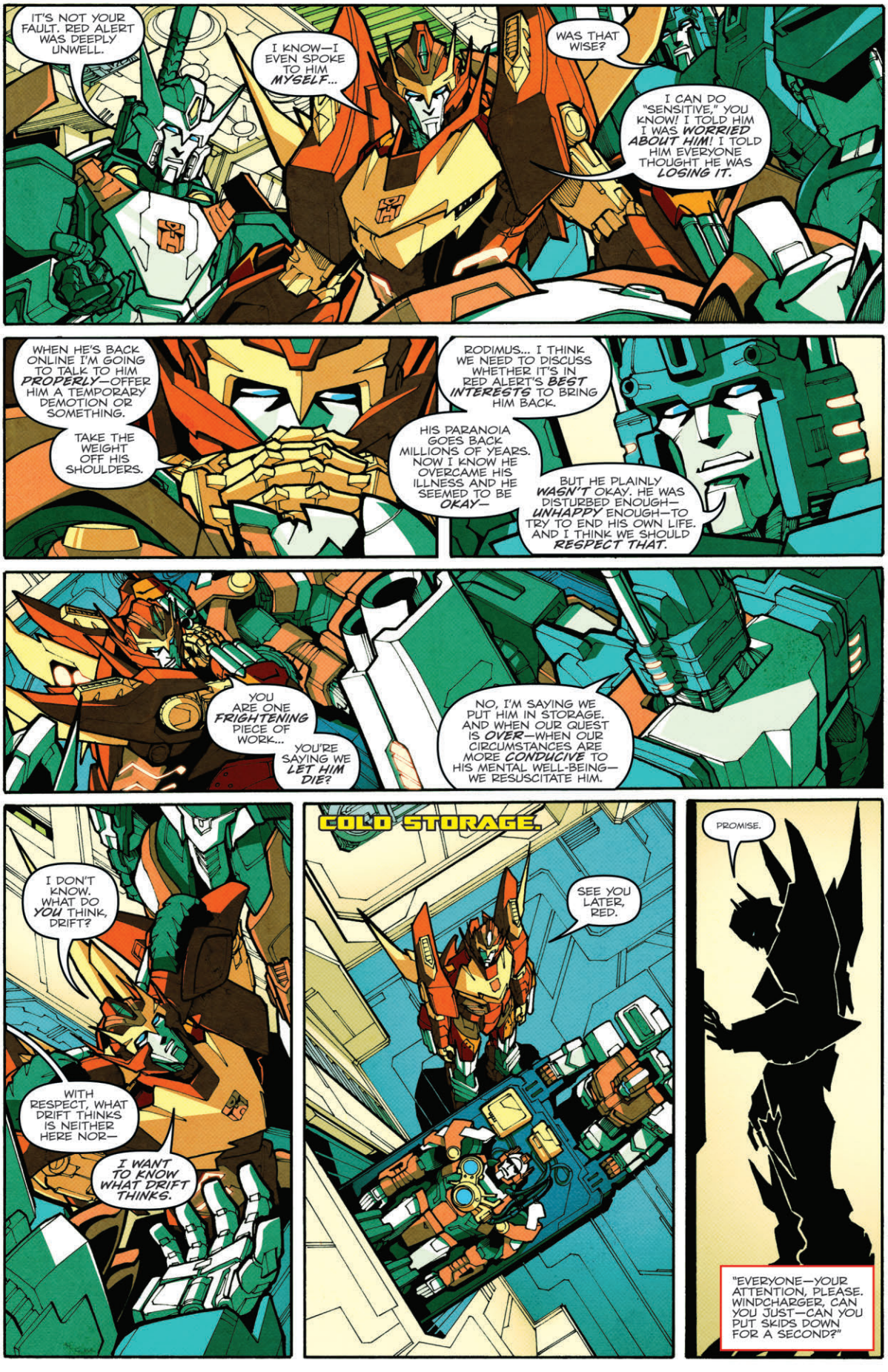

"YOU CERTAINLY WEREN'T SECOND ON THE LIST, SKIDS."
...A TOTALLY EPIC STORY BASED ON REAL EVENTS THAT DEFINITELY HAPPENED.
WHAT ARE YOU—? HEY! TAILGATE'S BEEN TAKING NOTES, EVERYONE!
SO WHAT? THE STORY'S GETTING COMPLICATED. IT'S ALL "PRO-VACATIONISTS" AND "ANTI-FUNCTIONARIES" AND PEOPLE I'VE NEVER HEARD OF.
NICE. THAT'S NOT HOW YOU SPELL... MOST OF THOSE WORDS, ACTUALLY.
I'VE HAD TO DO A SPECIAL PAGE SO I CAN KEEP TRACK OF WHO'S WHO.
HOW'S RING?
DON'T; HE HATES IT WHEN PEOPLE MISPRONOUNCE HIS NAME. HATES IT.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M SORRY, WRUNG—NO, WAIT, THAT DOESN'T WORK.
THERE. I'VE MADE HIM LOOK CROSS.
"GRRR. DON'T GET MY NAME WRONG."
OF COURSE THE IRONY IS THAT IF ANYONE ELSE WAS IN THIS CHAIR, RUNG WOULD BE AT THE TABLE, HELPING TO TELL THE STORY.
I MEAN, UBIQUITOUS ISN'T THE HALF OF IT—I ONCE CROSS-CHECKED HIS FACE AGAINST MY DATABASE AND IT NEARLY FRIED MY NEOCORTEX. BILLIONS OF MATCHES.
HE'S LIKE A HISTORICAL CONSTANT—AN OBSERVER, BUT NEVER AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT.
WELL, I'M AFRAID THAT HIS SUPPORTING ROLE IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS MAY BE COMING TO AN END: I'M DETECTING VERY LITTLE IN THE WAY OF BRAIN ACTIVITY. PERHAPS WE SHOULD—
WRAP THIS UP. YES, GOOD IDEA.
CLAP
PLACES, EVERYONE! TOO MUCH TALKING! TIME FOR ACTION!
SO—CHROMEDOME AND ROLLER HAVE JUST PICKED UP THE SPECIALISTS FROM THE ACADEMY OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY.
I LOVE IT HOW NO-ONE GIVES THE ACADEMY ITS FULL NAME ANYMORE...
I GOT BACK TO THE STATION TO FIND PROWL HAD GONE. NO EXPLANATION—HE'D JUST LEFT. I NEVER REALLY FORGAVE HIM FOR THAT.

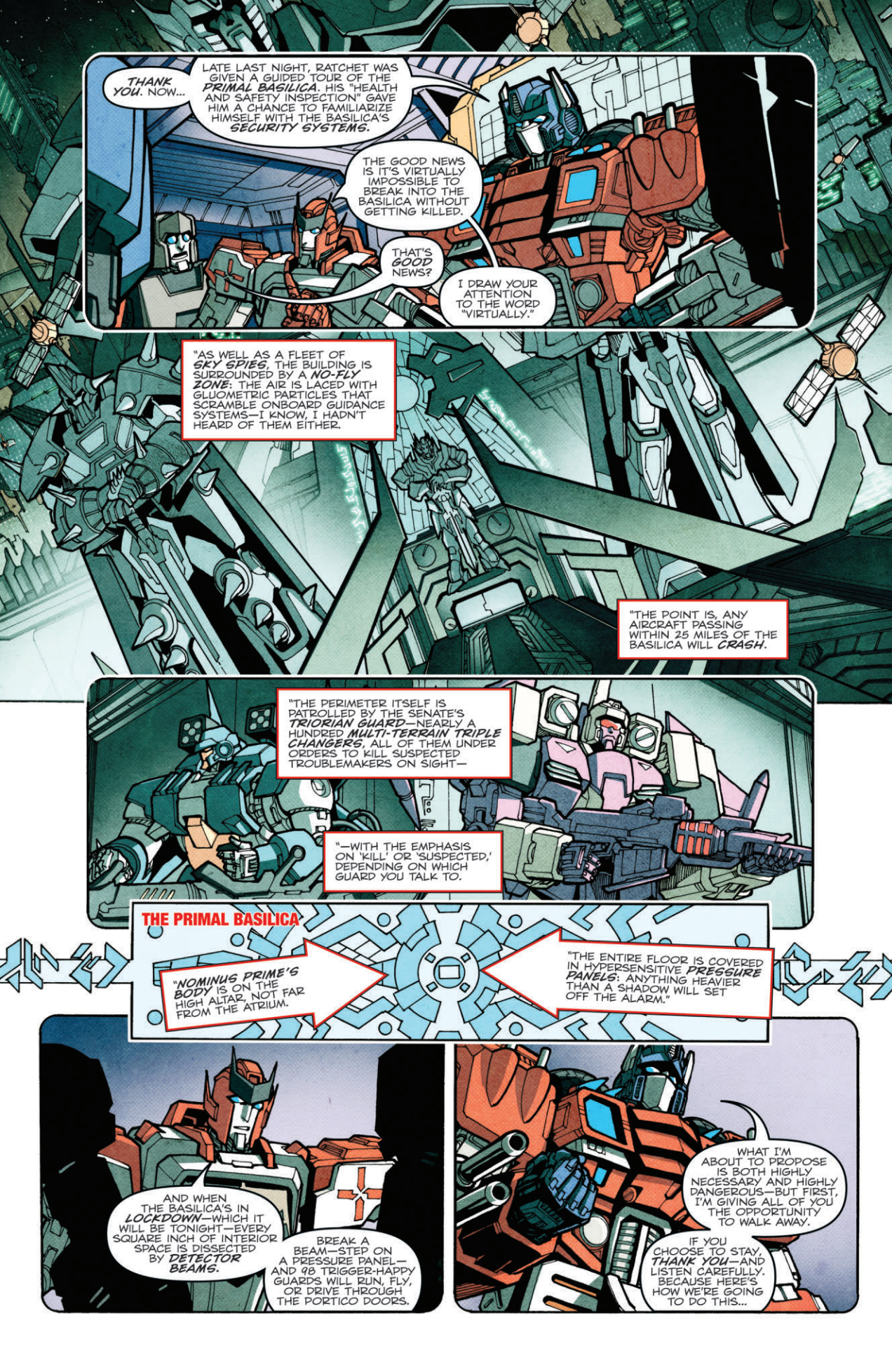
"I WAS TAKING MY IRRITATION OUT ON THE WALL WHEN PAX APPEARED AND STARTED STARING AT—WELL, STARING AT YOU, SKIDS."
IS... ANYTHING WRONG?
YOU'RE WEARING A MINIATURE MATRIX. NOTHING'S WRONG, YOU JUST—REMIND ME OF A FRIEND. HE WAS RELIGIOUS, TOO.
"SKIDS' TRINKET GAVE PAX AN IDEA. HALF AN HOUR LATER I WAS AT MECHAFORENSICS...
"...PAYING A VISIT TO THE BALLISTICS DEPARTMENT."
IRONFIST?
OH! SIR! SORRY, I WAS JUST—COME IN, COME IN!
IS NOW A GOOD TIME?
NOW'S A GLORIOUS TIME! I'VE JUST BOUGHT THE POWER BOOSTER ROD THAT DELTA MAGNUS USED TO TRICK THE NEBULANS INTO THINKING THAT HE WAS A GOD...!
WOW. THAT'S... THAT'S...
I KNOW!
"BACK THEN, IRONFIST WAS OBSESSED WITH DELTA MAGNUS AND THE PRIMAL VANGUARD. AND BECAUSE—I DON'T KNOW, PROBABLY BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE MADE FUN OF HIM, I PRETENDED TO HAVE AN INTEREST TOO."
SIR, PLEASE—TAKE A SEAT. I'LL SHOW YOU THE REST OF MY HAUL.
"TROUBLE IS, HE'D COME TO ASSUME THAT I WAS AS BIG A FAN AS HE WAS..."
THIS IS THE FOREVER GLASS FROM MOLDAVITE VI—THE ONE THAT TRAPS LIGHT?
YOU CAN STILL SEE CROSSCUT'S REFLECTION. HE'S WATCHING THE NEUROPARASITE CLIMB OUT OF AMBIT'S MOUTH...
GLORIOUS.
THIS IS BOREBIT'S SPARE DRILL, AND SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE IS A BOMB DISPOSAL KIT ONCE USED BY—
IRONFIST!
JUST—RELAX. PLEASE. PUT THE DRILL DOWN AND STEP AWAY FROM THE MEMORABILIA.
I'M SORRY, I—I GET CARRIED AWAY.
DON'T SAY ANYTHING TO PROWL. HE TOLD FLATFOOT I WAS SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME ON MY HOBBY AND THEY CONFISCATED MY LIFESIZE MODEL OF DELTA MAGNUS.


HOW'D YOU LIKE TO GET DELTA MAGNUS BACK?
YES!
I MEAN— HOW?
I NEED A FAVOR. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THE DECEPTICONS?
THE DECEPTICONS?
...
...NO.
SHOULD I HAVE?
OH IRONFIST. YOU LIVE SUCH A COSSETED LIFE.
OKAY, FORGET THE DECEPTICONS. YOU'VE HEARD OF THE MATRIX, RIGHT?
SIR, PLEASE. I DO HAVE A LIFE OUTSIDE OF THE PRIMAL VANGUARD, YOU KNOW!
BUT—I'M RIGHT IN THINKING THAT THE VANGUARD ACTED AS CUSTODIANS OF THE MATRIX DURING—
DURING THE INTERREGNUM, SIR, YES. NOVA PRIME DISAPPEARED AND DELTA CARRIED THE MATRIX UNTIL A SUCCESSOR WAS APPOINTED. IT WAS A GLORIOUS CHAPTER IN THEIR GLORIOUS HISTORY.
"I'M NOT EXAGGERATING: HE USED TO SAY 'GLORIOUS' ALL THE TIME. DELTA'S CATCHPHRASE."
I'VE WRITTEN SEVERAL MONOGRAPHS ON THE SUBJECT IF YOU'D LIKE TO—
NO THANKS.
I MEAN YES PLEASE. BUT FIRST—THAT FAVOR. I DON'T SUPPOSE AMONG ALL THESE COLLECTIBLES YOU'VE GOT—
—A PERFECT REPLICA OF THE MATRIX. EXACT IN EVERY DETAIL.
YES! AMAZING WORK, CHROMEDOME! I COULD HUG YOU!

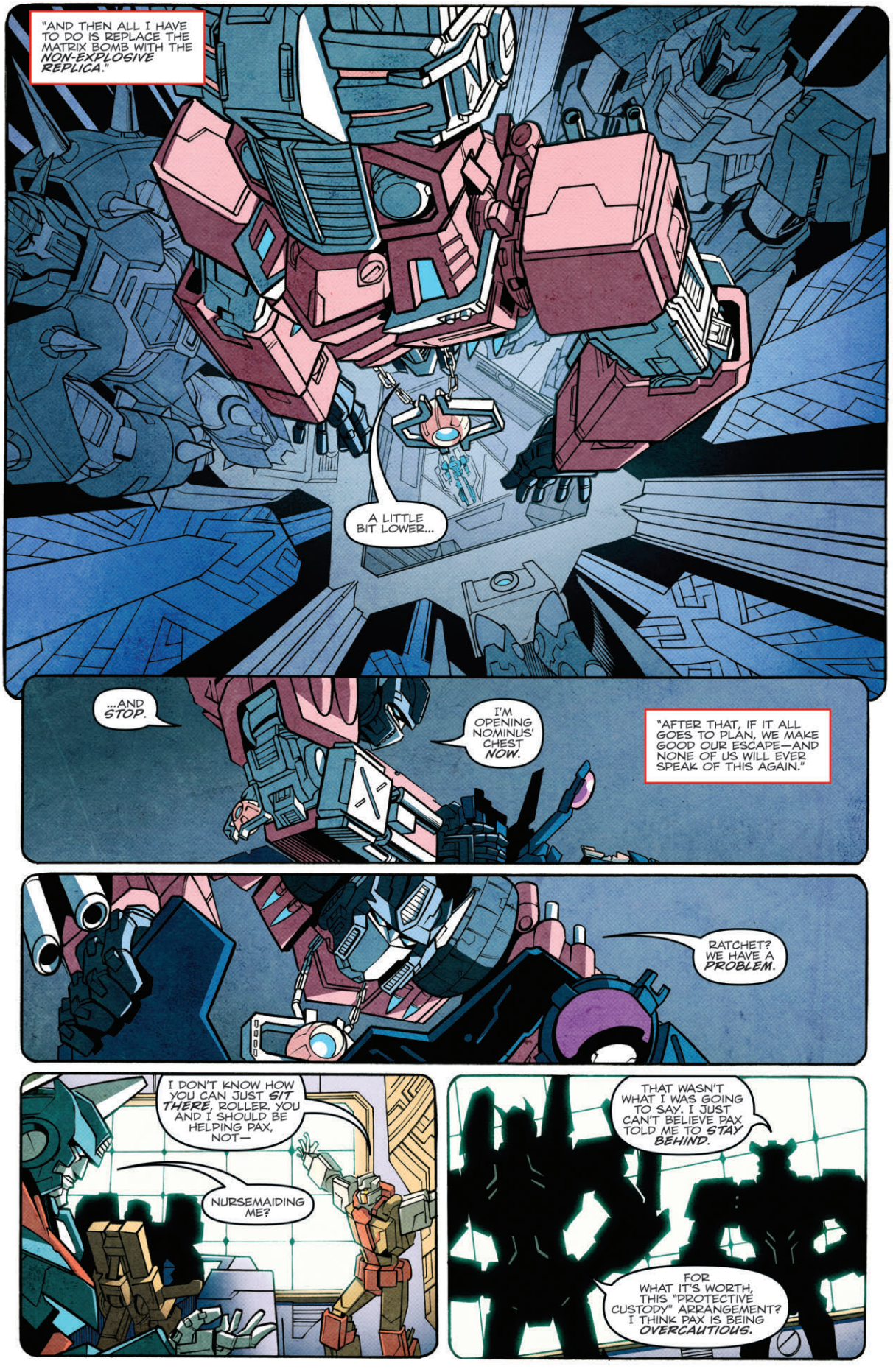

HOLD UP, CHROMEDOME. DO YOU MIND IF I—
INTERRUPT THE NARRATIVE FLOW? GO AHEAD, RATCHET.
THIS IS IMPORTANT. AFTER YOU GOT BACK, ROLLER TOOK ME AND PAX TO ONE SIDE... I THINK IT WAS THE LAST TIME THE THREE OF US WERE TOGETHER.
"FOR THAT REASON ALONE, I'D LIKE IT IN THE STORY..."
WHAT IS IT, ROLLER? WHAT'S THE MATTER?
NOT THIS AGAIN.
HIM. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HIM? REALLY.
HEAR HIM OUT, PAX.
THING IS, BIG GUY, I'VE DONE SOME DIGGING, AND—
YOU'VE WHAT?
I HACKED INTO THE MUNICIPAL MAINFRAME, LOOKED AT HIS VOTING RECORD, MADE SOME VERY DISCREET ENQUIRIES AND—
OKAY, YOU ACTUALLY LOOK ANGRIER THAN I ANTICIPATED.
WELL? WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?
THAT HE'S SUNK BILLIONS INTO OFFWORLD PROJECTS; THAT HE'S ON SPEAKING TERMS WITH THE OMEGA GUARDIANS; THAT HE VOTED REPEATEDLY TO RESURRECT THE SPARK-SPLICING PROGRAM—
—AND THAT HE'S BEEN SUSPENDED FROM THE GRAND IMPERIUM FIVE TIMES FOR—WHAT WAS IT?—"EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS UNBECOMING A SENATOR."
IS THAT IT?
ACTUALLY, PAX, NO, IT ISN'T.
THERE ARE—OTHERS. OTHER PEOPLE LIKE YOU. PEOPLE HE'S BEFRIENDED AND MODIFIED SO THEY CAN CARRY THE MATRIX...
LISTEN—I DIDN'T FALL IN WITH HIM BECAUSE I THOUGHT HE'D SINGLED ME OUT. I FELL IN WITH HIM BECAUSE, LIKE MEGATRON, HE OPENED MY EYES TO A CYBERTRON I'D BEEN TOO QUICK TO IGNORE.
EMPURATA AND RATIOISM AND THE INSTITUTE... HE FORCED ME TO RECOGNIZE THEM FOR WHAT THEY WERE: SYMPTOMS OF A WORLD GONE WRONG. AND I OWE HIM FOR THAT.
I TRUST HIM, ROLLER. END OF CONVERSATION.


THE LOST LIGHT MEDIBAY.
SUICIDE? ARE YOU SURE?
I'M SORRY, FIRST AID, I'M NOT BUYING THIS. RED ALERT WAS DECAPITATED, FOR ONE THING.
TECHNICALLY NOT, RODIMUS. HE DETACHED HIS OWN HEAD—AND THEN ALLOWED HIMSELF TO FALL INTO THE RESERVOIR, I GUESS.
IT'S CALLED SOFT TERMINATION. DEPENDING ON YOUR AGE AND YOUR DESIGN, YOU CAN SEVER THE LINK BETWEEN YOUR BRAIN MODULE AND YOUR SPARK QUITE CLEANLY.
HIS SPARK WOULD'VE FADED TO NOTHING IF WE HADN'T REATTACHED HIS HEAD IN TIME.
NO. I'M NOT BUYING IT.
SO YOU KEEP SAYING. BUT FIRST AID'S EXPLANATION MAKES SENSE.
NOT TO ME!
WHY WOULD A MEMBER OF MY CREW—SOMEONE ENTRUSTED TO MY CARE—FEEL THE NEED TO—
!!
RODIMUS. PLEASE.
CAREFUL.

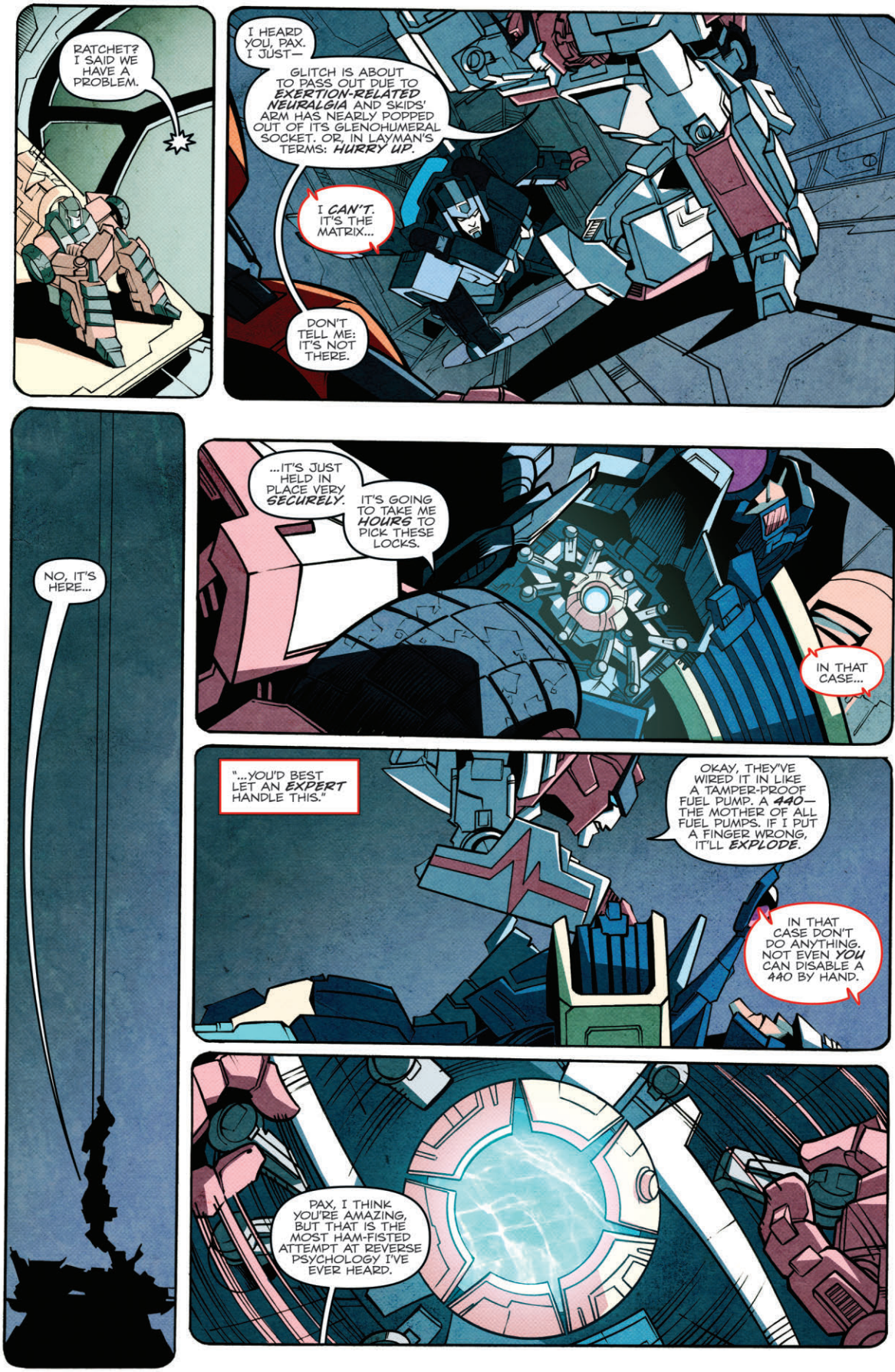

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. RED ALERT WAS DEEPLY UNWELL.
I KNOW—I EVEN SPOKE TO HIM *MYSELF*...
WAS THAT WISE?
I CAN DO "SENSITIVE," YOU KNOW! I TOLD HIM I WAS *WORRIED ABOUT HIM!* I TOLD HIM EVERYONE THOUGHT HE WAS *LOSING IT.*
WHEN HE'S BACK ONLINE I'M GOING TO TALK TO HIM *PROPERLY*—OFFER HIM A TEMPORARY DEMOTION OR SOMETHING.
TAKE THE WEIGHT OFF HIS SHOULDERS.
RODIMUS... I THINK WE NEED TO DISCUSS WHETHER IT'S IN RED ALERT'S *BEST INTERESTS* TO BRING HIM BACK.
HIS PARANOIA GOES BACK MILLIONS OF YEARS. NOW I KNOW HE OVERCAME HIS ILLNESS AND HE SEEMED TO BE *OKAY*—
BUT HE PLAINLY *WASN'T* OKAY. HE WAS DISTURBED ENOUGH—*UNHAPPY* ENOUGH—TO TRY TO END HIS OWN LIFE. AND I THINK WE SHOULD *RESPECT THAT.*
YOU ARE ONE *FRIGHTENING* PIECE OF WORK...
YOU'RE SAYING WE *LET HIM DIE?*
NO, I'M SAYING WE PUT HIM IN STORAGE. AND WHEN OUR QUEST IS *OVER*—WHEN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES ARE MORE *CONDUCIVE* TO HIS MENTAL WELL-BEING—WE RESUSCITATE HIM.
I DON'T KNOW. WHAT DO *YOU* THINK, DRIFT?
WITH RESPECT, WHAT DRIFT THINKS IS NEITHER HERE NOR—
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT DRIFT THINKS.
COLD STORAGE.
SEE YOU LATER, RED.
PROMISE.
"EVERYONE—YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE. WINDCHARGER, CAN YOU JUST—CAN YOU PUT SKIDS DOWN FOR A SECOND?"

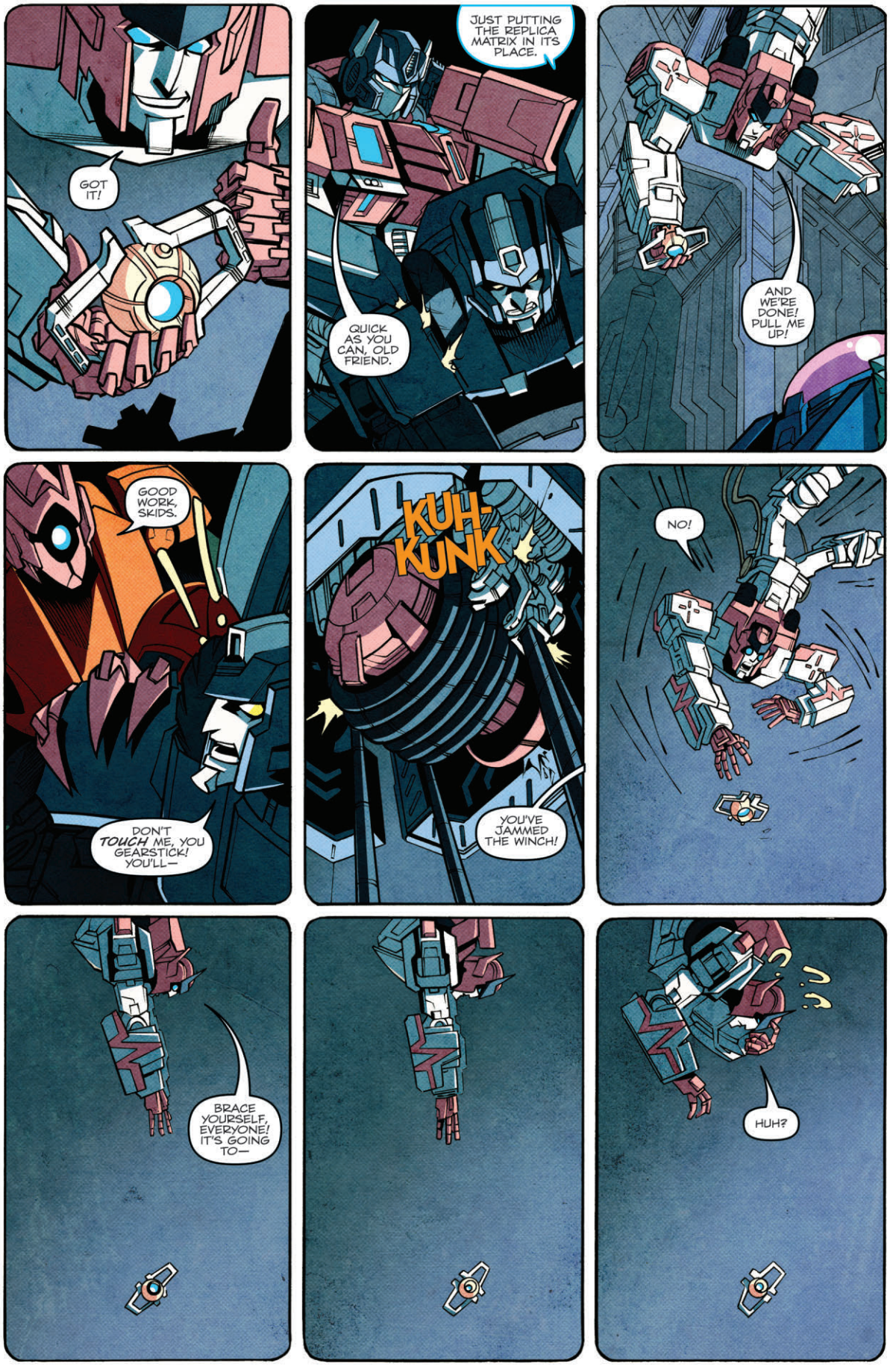

THANK YOU. NOW...
LATE LAST NIGHT, RATCHET WAS GIVEN A GUIDED TOUR OF THE PRIMAL BASILICA. HIS "HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTION" GAVE HIM A CHANCE TO FAMILIARIZE HIMSELF WITH THE BASILICA'S SECURITY SYSTEMS.
THE GOOD NEWS IS IT'S VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO BREAK INTO THE BASILICA WITHOUT GETTING KILLED.
THAT'S GOOD NEWS?
I DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO THE WORD "VIRTUALLY."
"AS WELL AS A FLEET OF SKY SPIES, THE BUILDING IS SURROUNDED BY A NO-FLY ZONE: THE AIR IS LACED WITH GLUOMETRIC PARTICLES THAT SCRAMBLE ONBOARD GUIDANCE SYSTEMS—I KNOW, I HADN'T HEARD OF THEM EITHER.
"THE POINT IS, ANY AIRCRAFT PASSING WITHIN 25 MILES OF THE BASILICA WILL CRASH.
"THE PERIMETER ITSELF IS PATROLLED BY THE SENATE'S TRIORIAN GUARD—NEARLY A HUNDRED MULTI-TERRAIN TRIPLE CHANGERS, ALL OF THEM UNDER ORDERS TO KILL SUSPECTED TROUBLEMAKERS ON SIGHT—
"—WITH THE EMPHASIS ON 'KILL' OR 'SUSPECTED,' DEPENDING ON WHICH GUARD YOU TALK TO.
THE PRIMAL BASILICA
"NOMINUS PRIME'S BODY IS ON THE HIGH ALTAR, NOT FAR FROM THE ATRIUM.
"THE ENTIRE FLOOR IS COVERED IN HYPERSENSITIVE PRESSURE PANELS: ANYTHING HEAVIER THAN A SHADOW WILL SET OFF THE ALARM."
AND WHEN THE BASILICA'S IN LOCKDOWN—WHICH IT WILL BE TONIGHT—EVERY SQUARE INCH OF INTERIOR SPACE IS DISSECTED BY DETECTOR BEAMS.
BREAK A BEAM—STEP ON A PRESSURE PANEL—AND 98 TRIGGER-HAPPY GUARDS WILL RUN, FLY, OR DRIVE THROUGH THE PORTICO DOORS.
WHAT I'M ABOUT TO PROPOSE IS BOTH HIGHLY NECESSARY AND HIGHLY DANGEROUS—BUT FIRST, I'M GIVING ALL OF YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO WALK AWAY.
IF YOU CHOOSE TO STAY, THANK YOU—AND LISTEN CAREFULLY. BECAUSE HERE'S HOW WE'RE GOING TO DO THIS...

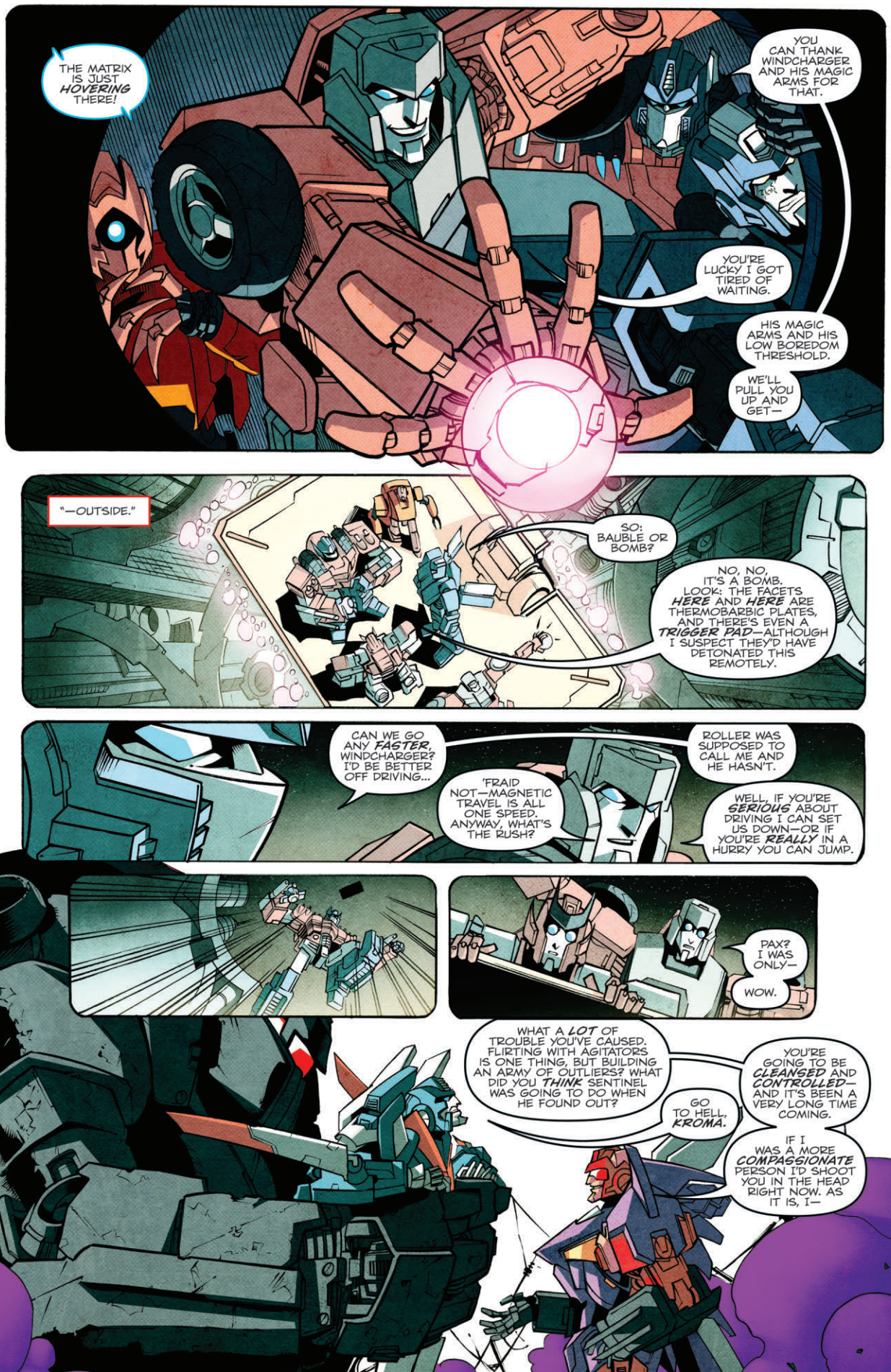
"ROLLER WILL HACK INTO THE SKY SPY NETWORK AND PATCH IN SOME OLD FOOTAGE. ANYONE MONITORING THE SKY SPIES WILL ASSUME IT'S A QUIET NIGHT.
REGISTRATION CLOSED
"WE'LL APPROACH THE BASILICA FROM ABOVE.
"POWERED FLIGHT IS OUT THE QUESTION SO WE'LL GO FOR THE LOW-TECH APPROACH: A LIGHTWEIGHT MAINTENANCE BASIN THAT WINDCHARGER CAN KEEP ALOFT USING HIS, ER..."
"MAGIC ARMS, PAX. THAT'S WHAT I CALL 'EM."
"A VERTICAL DESCENT SHOULD REDUCE THE CHANCES OF US BEING SEEN BY THE PERIMETER GUARDS.
"WE'LL LAND BY THE ATRIUM. WINDCHARGER WILL KEEP WATCH WHILE RATCHET, SKIDS, GLITCH, AND I BREAK IN."
NEARLY THROUGH...
"ONCE WE'RE IN THE CEILING ABOVE THE CENTRAL CHAMBER, GLITCH CAN USE HIS GIFT TO SHUT DOWN THE DETECTOR BEAMS."
OW! OW! OW!
SHHH! WHAT'S WRONG? DOES IT HURT?
IT ALWAYS HURTS! AND—OW!—IT'S GOING TO GET WORSE. THIS GENERATOR POWERS A LOT OF BEAMS; ANY MINUTE NOW I'M EITHER GOING TO SCREAM OR PASS OUT...
"WE'LL HAVE TO WORK QUICKLY—ESPECIALLY SKIDS."
I SHOULD HAVE SAID THIS EARLIER, BUT—AS A TRAINEE THEORETICIAN WHO CAN MASTER VIRTUALLY ANY SKILL, I'M KIND OF INSULTED THAT YOU BROUGHT ME ALONG FOR MY GRAPPLING HOOK.


"AND THEN ALL I HAVE TO DO IS REPLACE THE MATRIX BOMB WITH THE NON-EXPLOSIVE REPLICA."
A LITTLE BIT LOWER...
...AND STOP.
I'M OPENING NOMINUS' CHEST NOW.
"AFTER THAT, IF IT ALL GOES TO PLAN, WE MAKE GOOD OUR ESCAPE—AND NONE OF US WILL EVER SPEAK OF THIS AGAIN."
RATCHET? WE HAVE A PROBLEM.
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN JUST SIT THERE, ROLLER. YOU AND I SHOULD BE HELPING PAX, NOT—
NURSEMAIDING ME?
THAT WASN'T WHAT I WAS GOING TO SAY. I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE PAX TOLD ME TO STAY BEHIND.
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, THIS "PROTECTIVE CUSTODY" ARRANGEMENT? I THINK PAX IS BEING OVERCAUTIOUS.

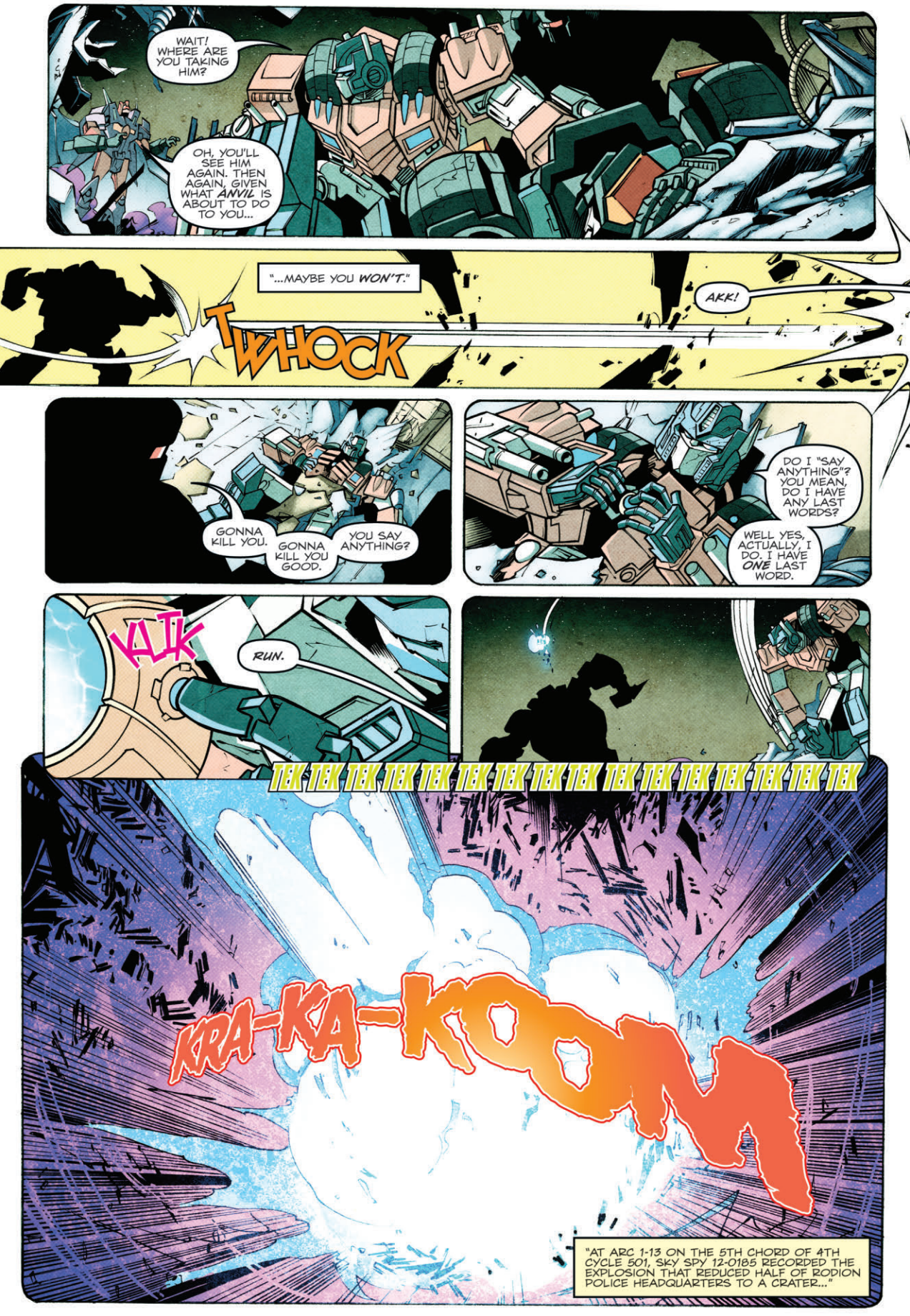
THE FACT IS, I'M FAR TOO HIGH PROFILE FOR SENTINEL TO...
...RISK...
...OH NO.
—ADEMY OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY, WHERE TEAMS OF PYROBOTS ARE STRUGGLING TO CONTAIN A BLAZE WHICH THE AUTHORITIES ARE BLAMING ON A FAULTY PROPEX CONDUIT. REPORTS SUGGEST THAT—
WE'RE IN SIGNIFICANT TROUBLE.
NOK NOK
DOOR.
NOK NOK
ROLLER, I REALLY DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD—
HIDE. BOTH OF YOU. GO ON, SHOO! I'LL DEAL WITH THIS.
KA-KOOOM
BEST. TIP OFF. EVER.

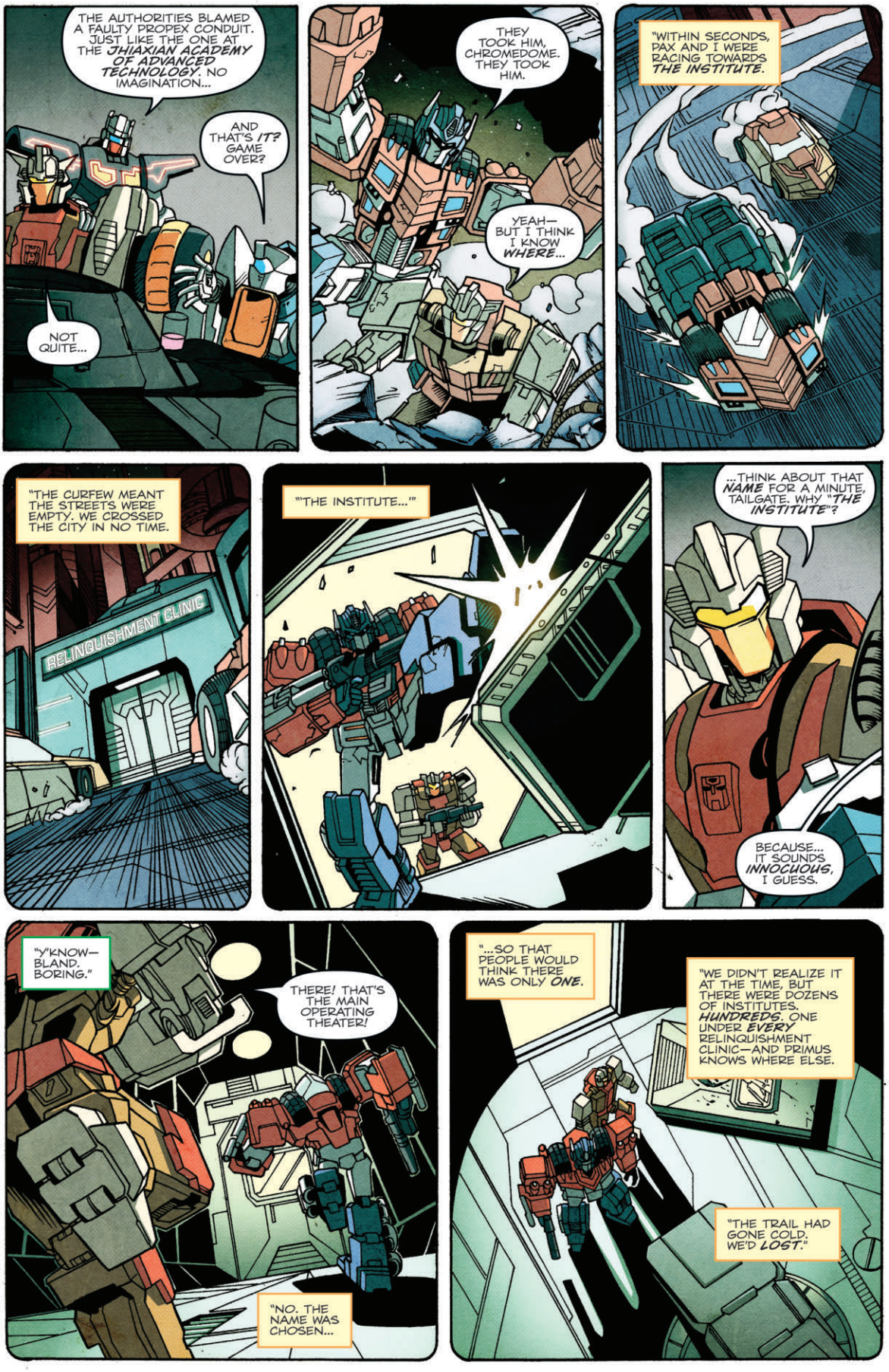

RATCHET? I SAID WE HAVE A PROBLEM.
I HEARD YOU, PAX. I JUST—
GLITCH IS ABOUT TO PASS OUT DUE TO EXERTION-RELATED NEURALGIA AND SKIDS' ARM HAS NEARLY POPPED OUT OF ITS GLENOHUMERAL SOCKET. OR, IN LAYMAN'S TERMS: HURRY UP.
I CAN'T. IT'S THE MATRIX...
DON'T TELL ME: IT'S NOT THERE.
NO, IT'S HERE...
...IT'S JUST HELD IN PLACE VERY SECURELY.
IT'S GOING TO TAKE ME HOURS TO PICK THESE LOCKS.
IN THAT CASE...
"...YOU'D BEST LET AN EXPERT HANDLE THIS."
OKAY, THEY'VE WIRED IT IN LIKE A TAMPER-PROOF FUEL PUMP. A 440— THE MOTHER OF ALL FUEL PUMPS. IF I PUT A FINGER WRONG, IT'LL EXPLODE.
IN THAT CASE DON'T DO ANYTHING. NOT EVEN YOU CAN DISABLE A 440 BY HAND.
PAX, I THINK YOU'RE AMAZING, BUT THAT IS THE MOST HAM-FISTED ATTEMPT AT REVERSE PSYCHOLOGY I'VE EVER HEARD.

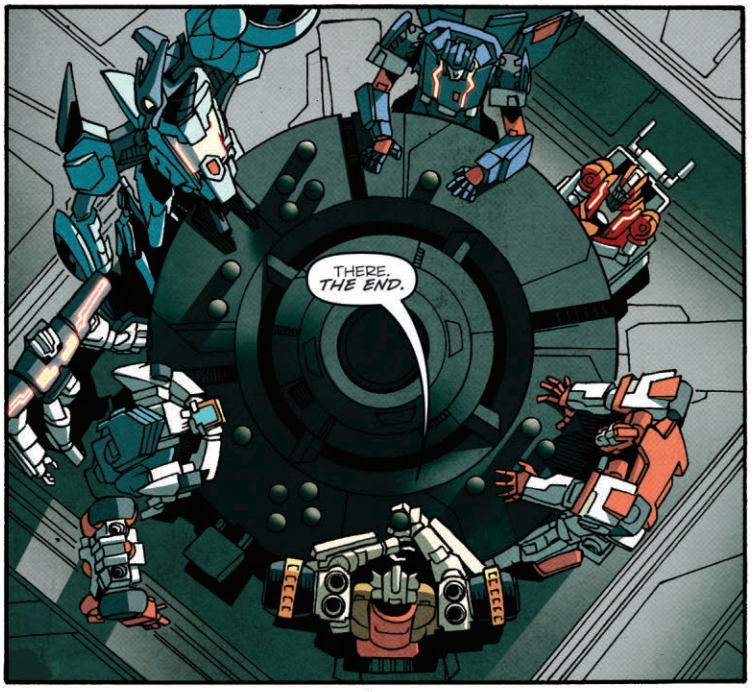

GOT IT!
JUST PUTTING THE REPLICA MATRIX IN ITS PLACE.
QUICK AS YOU CAN, OLD FRIEND.
AND WE'RE DONE! PULL ME UP!
GOOD WORK, SKIDS.
DON'T *TOUCH* ME, YOU GEARSTICK! YOU'LL—
KUH-KUNK
YOU'VE JAMMED THE WINCH!
NO!
BRACE YOURSELF, EVERYONE! IT'S GOING TO—
HUH?


THE MATRIX IS JUST *HOVERING* THERE!
YOU CAN THANK WINDCHARGER AND HIS MAGIC ARMS FOR THAT.
YOU'RE LUCKY I GOT TIRED OF WAITING.
HIS MAGIC ARMS AND HIS LOW BOREDOM THRESHOLD.
WE'LL PULL YOU UP AND GET—
"—OUTSIDE."
SO: BAUBLE OR BOMB?
NO, NO, IT'S A BOMB. LOOK: THE FACETS *HERE* AND *HERE* ARE THERMOBARBIC PLATES, AND THERE'S EVEN A *TRIGGER PAD*—ALTHOUGH I SUSPECT THEY'D HAVE DETONATED THIS REMOTELY.
CAN WE GO ANY *FASTER*, WINDCHARGER? I'D BE BETTER OFF DRIVING...
'FRAID NOT—MAGNETIC TRAVEL IS ALL ONE SPEED. ANYWAY, WHAT'S THE RUSH?
ROLLER WAS SUPPOSED TO CALL ME AND HE HASN'T.
WELL, IF YOU'RE *SERIOUS* ABOUT DRIVING I CAN SET US DOWN—OR IF YOU'RE *REALLY* IN A HURRY YOU CAN JUMP.
PAX? I WAS ONLY—
WOW.
WHAT A *LOT* OF TROUBLE YOU'VE CAUSED. FLIRTING WITH AGITATORS IS ONE THING, BUT BUILDING AN ARMY OF OUTLIERS? WHAT DID YOU *THINK* SENTINEL WAS GOING TO DO WHEN HE FOUND OUT?
GO TO HELL, *KROMA*.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE *CLEANSED* AND *CONTROLLED*—AND IT'S BEEN A VERY LONG TIME COMING.
IF I WAS A MORE *COMPASSIONATE* PERSON I'D SHOOT YOU IN THE HEAD RIGHT NOW. AS IT IS, I—

BOOM
LEAVE THIS TO ME.
I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT, CAPTAIN. I WANT TO SWAP.
HAND HIM OVER OR I FLASH-FRY THIS ONE'S BRAIN.
UHRRR...
WELL?
NO. I CAN'T LET THIS HAPPEN.
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU—
IT'S OVER, PAX. IM SURRENDERING.
REMEMBER ME AS I WAS.


WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU TAKING HIM?
OH, YOU'LL SEE HIM AGAIN. THEN AGAIN, GIVEN WHAT ANVIL IS ABOUT TO DO TO YOU...
"...MAYBE YOU WON'T."
TWHOCK
AKK!
GONNA KILL YOU.
GONNA KILL YOU GOOD.
YOU SAY ANYTHING?
DO I "SAY ANYTHING"? YOU MEAN, DO I HAVE ANY LAST WORDS?
WELL YES, ACTUALLY, I DO. I HAVE ONE LAST WORD.
KLIK
RUN.
TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK TEK
KRA-KA-KOOM
"AT ARC 1-13 ON THE 5TH CHORD OF 4TH CYCLE 501, SKY SPY 12-0185 RECORDED THE EXPLOSION THAT REDUCED HALF OF RODION POLICE HEADQUARTERS TO A CRATER..."

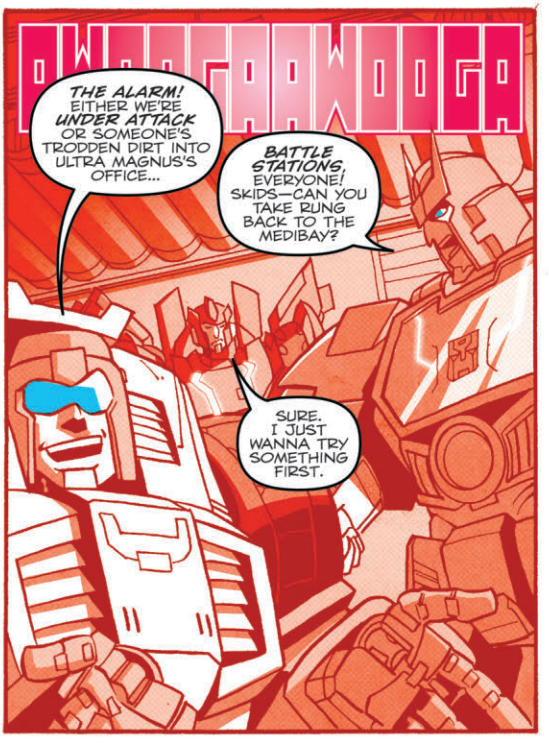

THE AUTHORITIES BLAMED A FAULTY PROPEX CONDUIT. JUST LIKE THE ONE AT THE JHIAXIAN ACADEMY OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY. NO IMAGINATION...
AND THAT'S IT? GAME OVER?
NOT QUITE...
THEY TOOK HIM, CHROMEDOME. THEY TOOK HIM.
YEAH— BUT I THINK I KNOW WHERE...
"WITHIN SECONDS, PAX AND I WERE RACING TOWARDS THE INSTITUTE.
"THE CURFEW MEANT THE STREETS WERE EMPTY. WE CROSSED THE CITY IN NO TIME.
RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC
"'THE INSTITUTE...'"
...THINK ABOUT THAT NAME FOR A MINUTE, TAILGATE. WHY "THE INSTITUTE"?
BECAUSE... IT SOUNDS INNOCUOUS, I GUESS.
"Y'KNOW— BLAND. BORING."
THERE! THAT'S THE MAIN OPERATING THEATER!
"NO. THE NAME WAS CHOSEN...
"...SO THAT PEOPLE WOULD THINK THERE WAS ONLY ONE.
"WE DIDN'T REALIZE IT AT THE TIME, BUT THERE WERE DOZENS OF INSTITUTES. HUNDREDS. ONE UNDER EVERY RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC—AND PRIMUS KNOWS WHERE ELSE.
"THE TRAIL HAD GONE COLD. WE'D LOST."


THERE. THE END.

SO... DID PROTEUS KEEP HIS PROMISE?
WELL NO—BUT YOU CAN HARDLY BLAME HIM, GIVEN WHAT HAPPENED NEXT. AND YEARS LATER, ZETA PRIME MADE IT COMPULSORY FOR DECEPTICONS TO REGISTER, AND YOU HAD THE PROTESTS, AND—

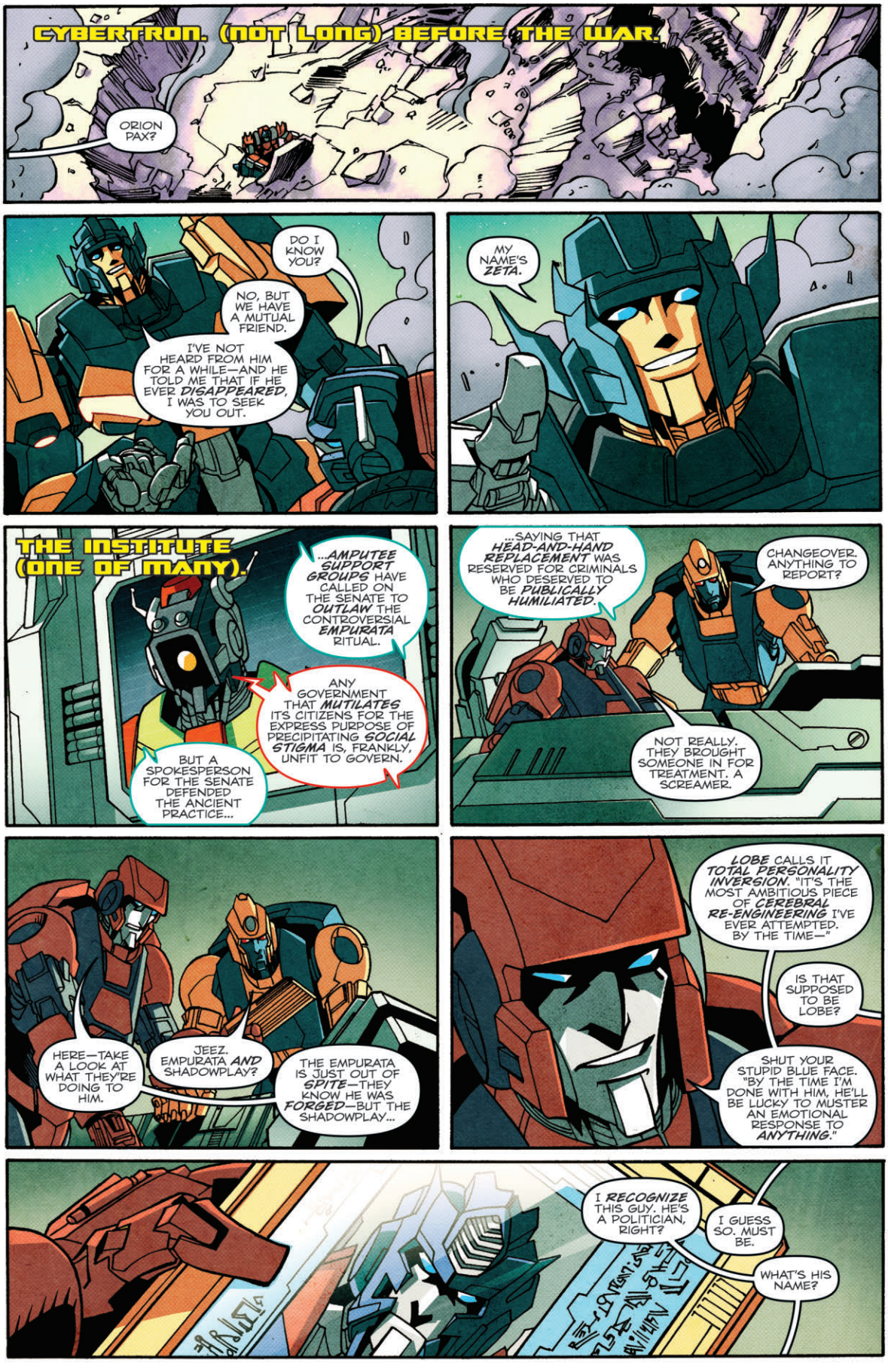
OOH! OOH! WHAT ABOUT ORION PAX? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
ORION PAX...?
HE WAS GREAT! I REALLY LIKED HIM. "I TRUST HIM, ROLLER. END OF CONVERSATION." I'M GONNA START SAYING STUFF LIKE THAT.
TAILGATE— ORION PAX BECAME OPTIMUS PRIME. THEY'RE THE SAME PERSON. I THOUGHT YOU KNEW THAT.
WHAT?!

YOU MEAN THIS IS ORION PAX?
WELL I'M FLOORED. I DID NOT SEE THAT COMING.


KRAWOOGA
THE ALARM! EITHER WE'RE UNDER ATTACK OR SOMEONE'S TROPPED DIRT INTO ULTRA MAGNUS'S OFFICE...
BATTLE STATIONS, EVERYONE! SKIDS—CAN YOU TAKE RUNG BACK TO THE MEDIBAY?
SURE. I JUST WANNA TRY SOMETHING FIRST.

HEY EYEBROWS. IT'S ME.
I SHOULDN'T CALL YOU EYEBROWS, SHOULD I? IT'S NOT VERY RESPECTFUL. FROM NOW ON, IT'S RING—I MEAN RANG.
IT IS RANG, ISN'T IT? RANG AS IN BELL?

...
IT'S... RUNG.
FOREVER.


CYBERTRON. (NOT LONG) BEFORE THE WAR.
ORION PAX?
DO I KNOW YOU?
NO, BUT WE HAVE A MUTUAL FRIEND.
I'VE NOT HEARD FROM HIM FOR A WHILE—AND HE TOLD ME THAT IF HE EVER DISAPPEARED, I WAS TO SEEK YOU OUT.
MY NAME'S ZETA.
THE INSTITUTE (ONE OF MANY).
...AMPUTEE SUPPORT GROUPS HAVE CALLED ON THE SENATE TO OUTLAW THE CONTROVERSIAL EMPURATA RITUAL.
ANY GOVERNMENT THAT MUTILATES ITS CITIZENS FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF PRECIPITATING SOCIAL STIGMA IS, FRANKLY, UNFIT TO GOVERN.
BUT A SPOKESPERSON FOR THE SENATE DEFENDED THE ANCIENT PRACTICE...
...SAYING THAT HEAD-AND-HAND REPLACEMENT WAS RESERVED FOR CRIMINALS WHO DESERVED TO BE PUBLICALLY HUMILIATED.
CHANGEOVER. ANYTHING TO REPORT?
NOT REALLY. THEY BROUGHT SOMEONE IN FOR TREATMENT. A SCREAMER.
HERE—TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT THEY'RE DOING TO HIM.
JEEZ. EMPURATA AND SHADOWPLAY?
THE EMPURATA IS JUST OUT OF SPITE—THEY KNOW HE WAS FORGED—BUT THE SHADOWPLAY...
LOBE CALLS IT TOTAL PERSONALITY INVERSION. "IT'S THE MOST AMBITIOUS PIECE OF CEREBRAL RE-ENGINEERING I'VE EVER ATTEMPTED. BY THE TIME—"
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE LOBE?
SHUT YOUR STUPID BLUE FACE. "BY THE TIME I'M DONE WITH HIM, HE'LL BE LUCKY TO MUSTER AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO ANYTHING."
I RECOGNIZE THIS GUY. HE'S A POLITICIAN, RIGHT?
I GUESS SO. MUST BE.
WHAT'S HIS NAME?

"SENATOR SHOCKWAVE."
SHADOWPLAY
[CONCLUSION]
AN INTIMATE BEHEADING

RODIMUS
Commander of the Lost Light
Autobots One-time Matrix holder. Brave, charismatic, reckless. Finds it difficult to sit still.

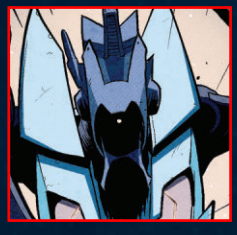
ULTRA MAGNUS
Second in command/ Duly Appointed Enforcer of the Tyrest Accord
Takes job (and everything else) extremely seriously. Smiled once and regretted it ever since.

DRIFT
Nominal third in command
Ex-Decepticon with a thousand theories about the Knights of Cybertron, all of them wrong.

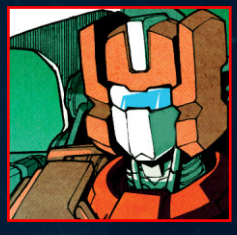
BRAINSTORM
Ship's genius (self-proclaimed)
Amoral, single-minded workaholic and possible genius. Carries briefcase containing The Unmentionable.

RATCHET
Chief Medical Officer (for now)
A world-weary super-medic with stolen hands. Recent brush with death has reinforced his rational side.

RED ALERT
(Somehow still) Director of Security
Best ears in the business. Prone to wandering off.



WHIRL
Warrior/ ex-watchmaker
Ex-Wrecker. Twice voted "Autobot most likely to defect." Best avoided.



FIRST AID
Chief Medical Officer in training
Wreckers-fan with ~~an obsession~~ a passing interest in Autobot badges.

SWERVE
Barkeep
Nickname at the academy was "Shut The Hell Up."

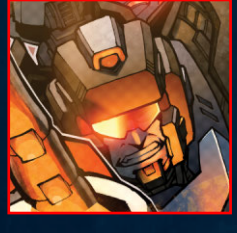
CHROMEDOME
Mnemosurgeon
Cynical. Prone to moping. Resents own talents. Relies on Rewind to keep him honest.

REWIND
Archivist/Historian
A walking database. Excitable and trusting. Uses head-mounted camera to record history as it happens.

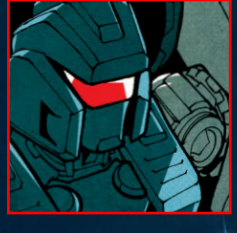
CYCLONUS
Ex-lieutenant of Galvatron
Dour and unrepentant. A fierce patriot still reeling from the loss of "his" Cybertron.

TAILGATE
Bomb Disposal
A wannabe Autobot trying to adjust to the modern world.

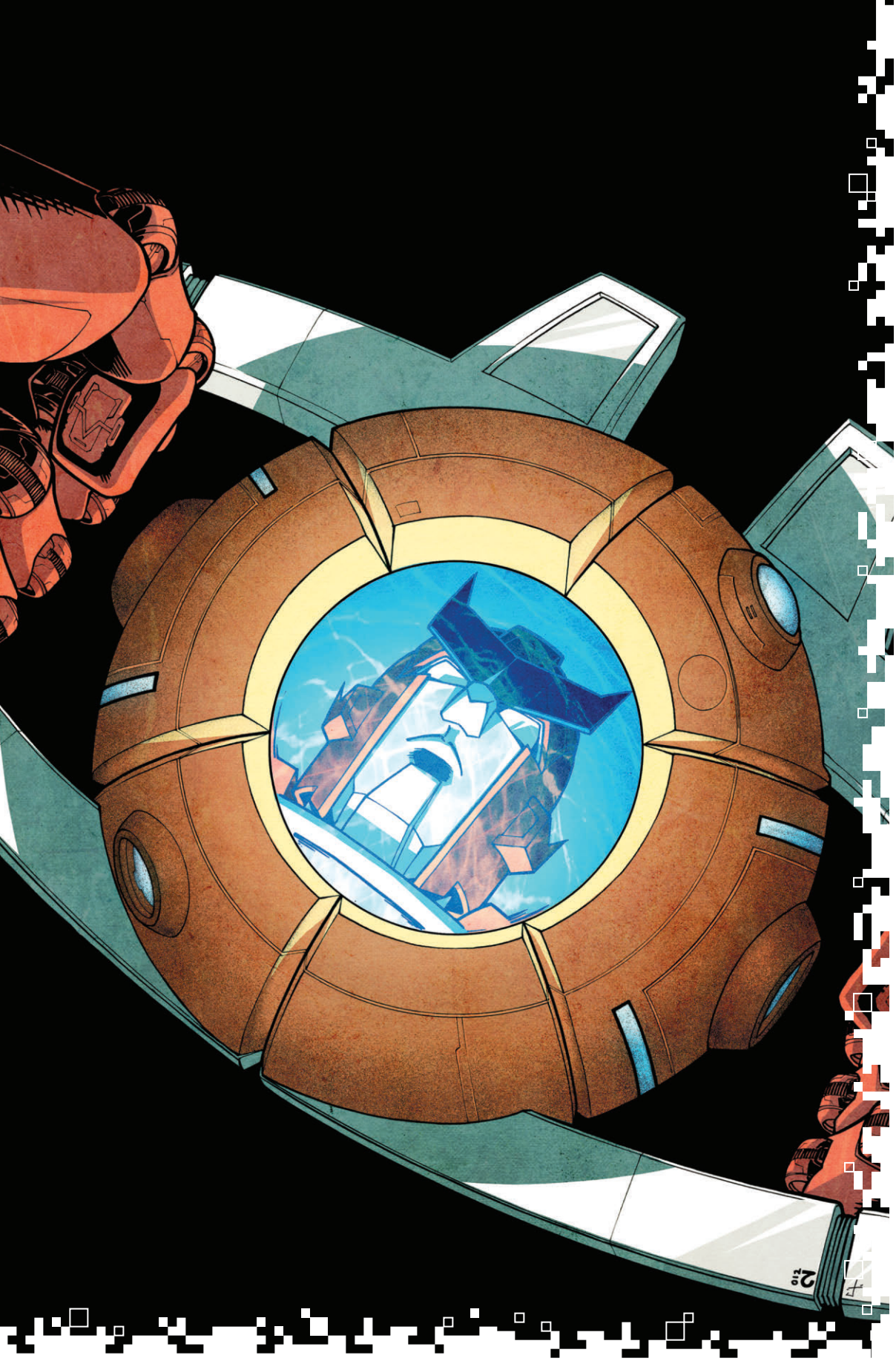
SKIDS
Theoretician
Risk-taking amnesiac who's misplaced his gun.



TRAILBREAKER
One-trick pony
Resents the forcefield that made him famous. Likes a drink.



PIPES
Aspiring Explorer
Trying hard to be more impulsive. Not having a good time of it, lately.



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #11 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE ANNUAL COVER RI

by **JIMBO SALGADO** Colors by **JUAN FERNANDEZ**

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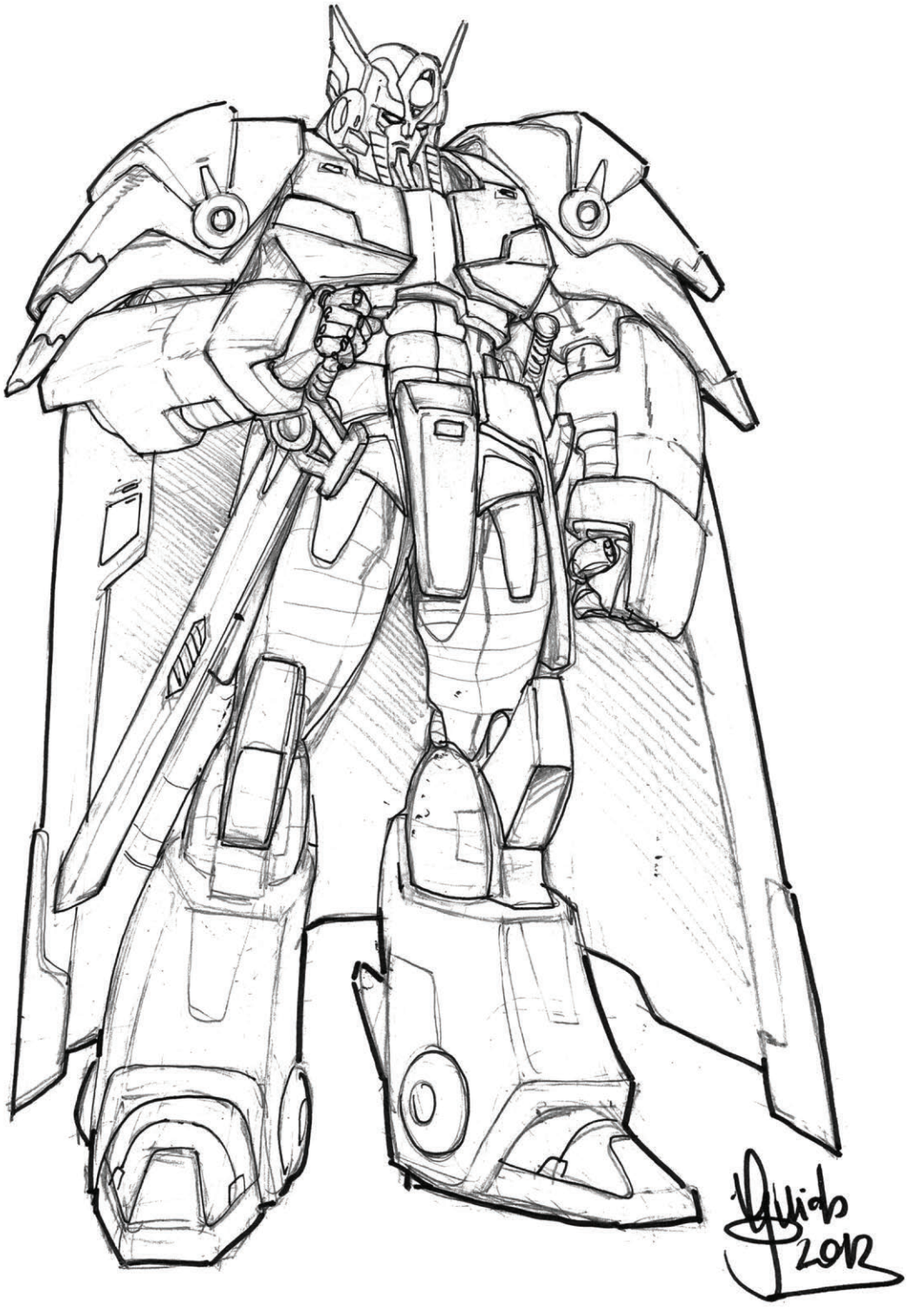
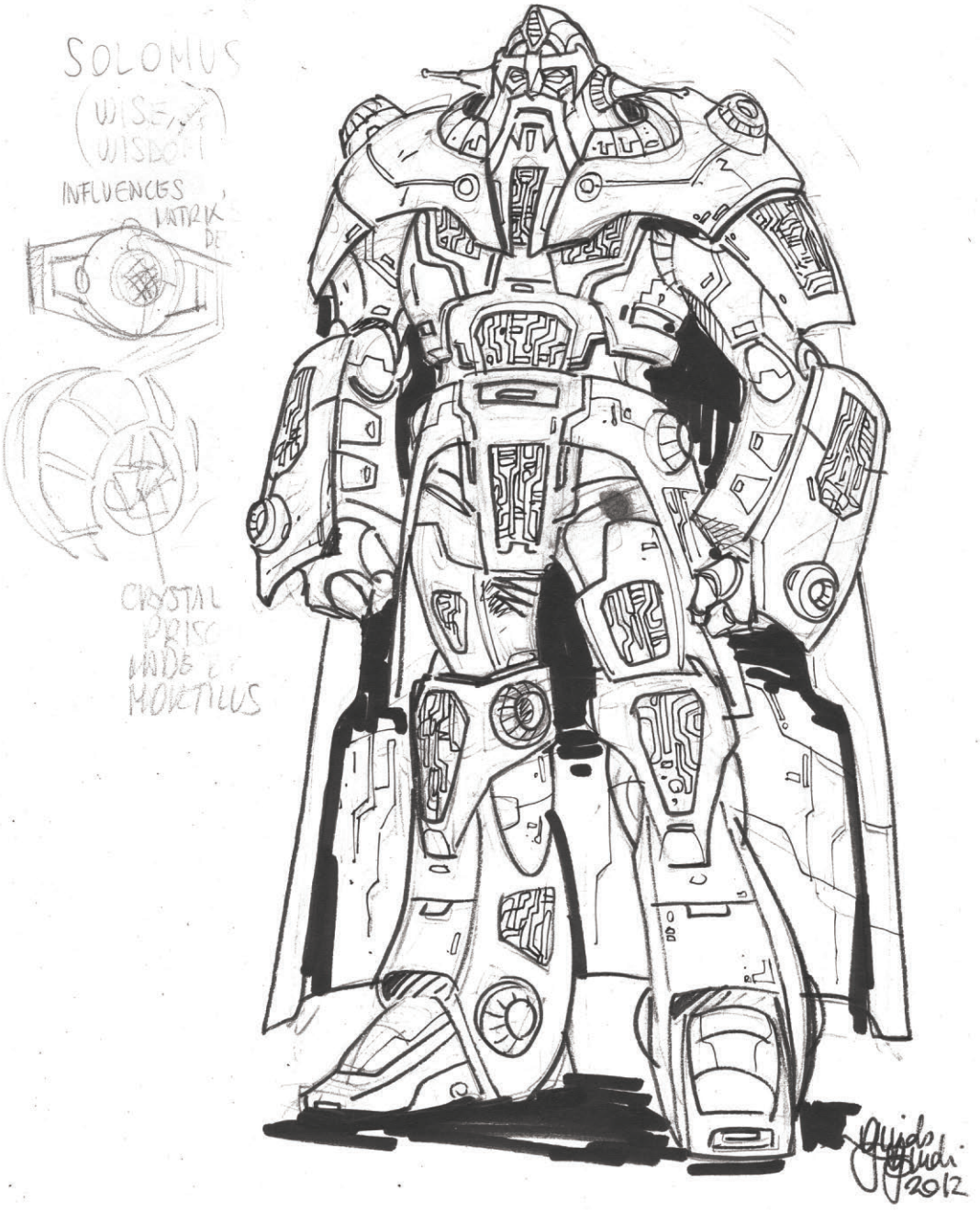


Sketch by **GUIDO GUIDI**

THE GUIDING HAND

-SOLOMUS-

(WISDOM)



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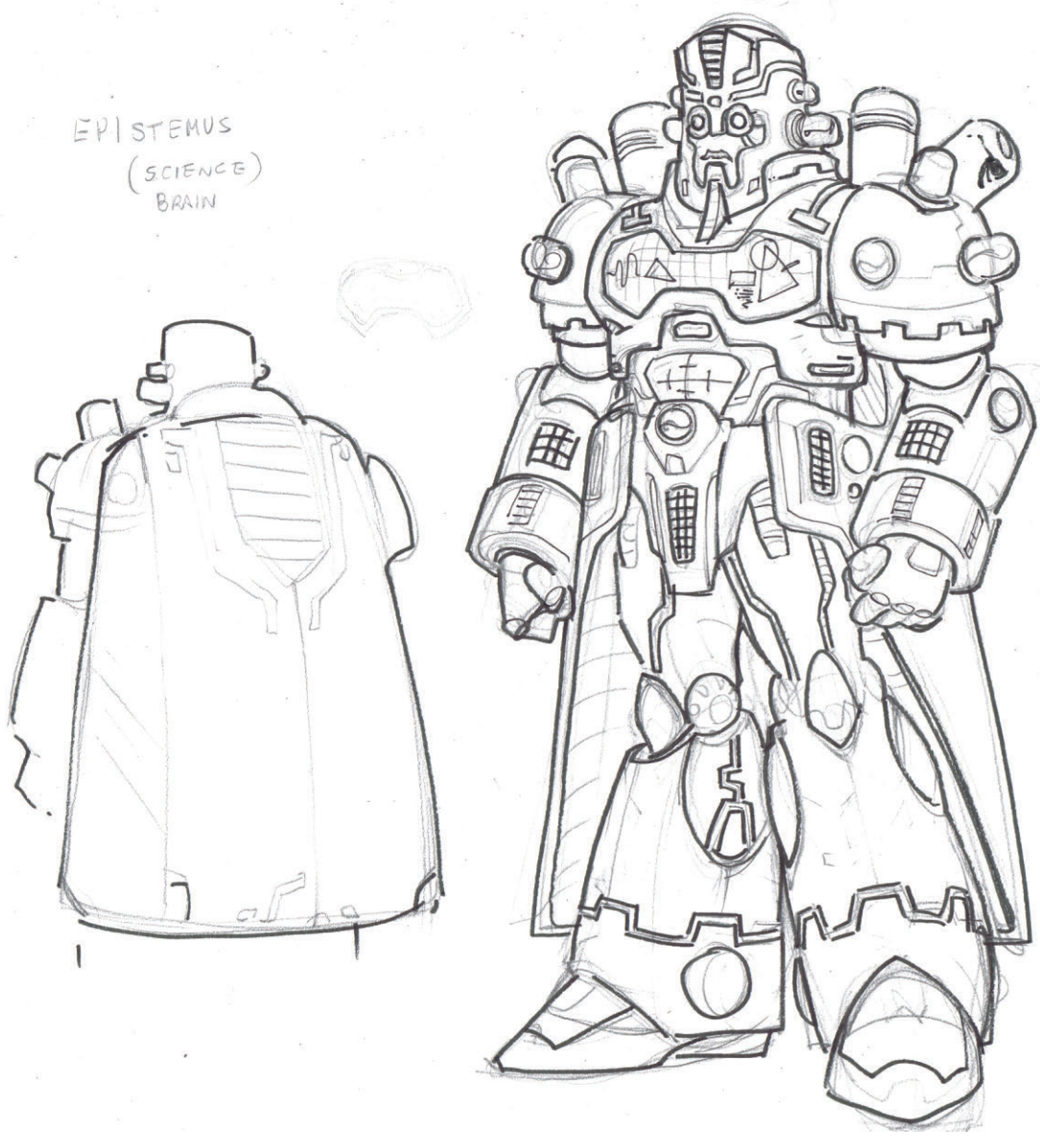

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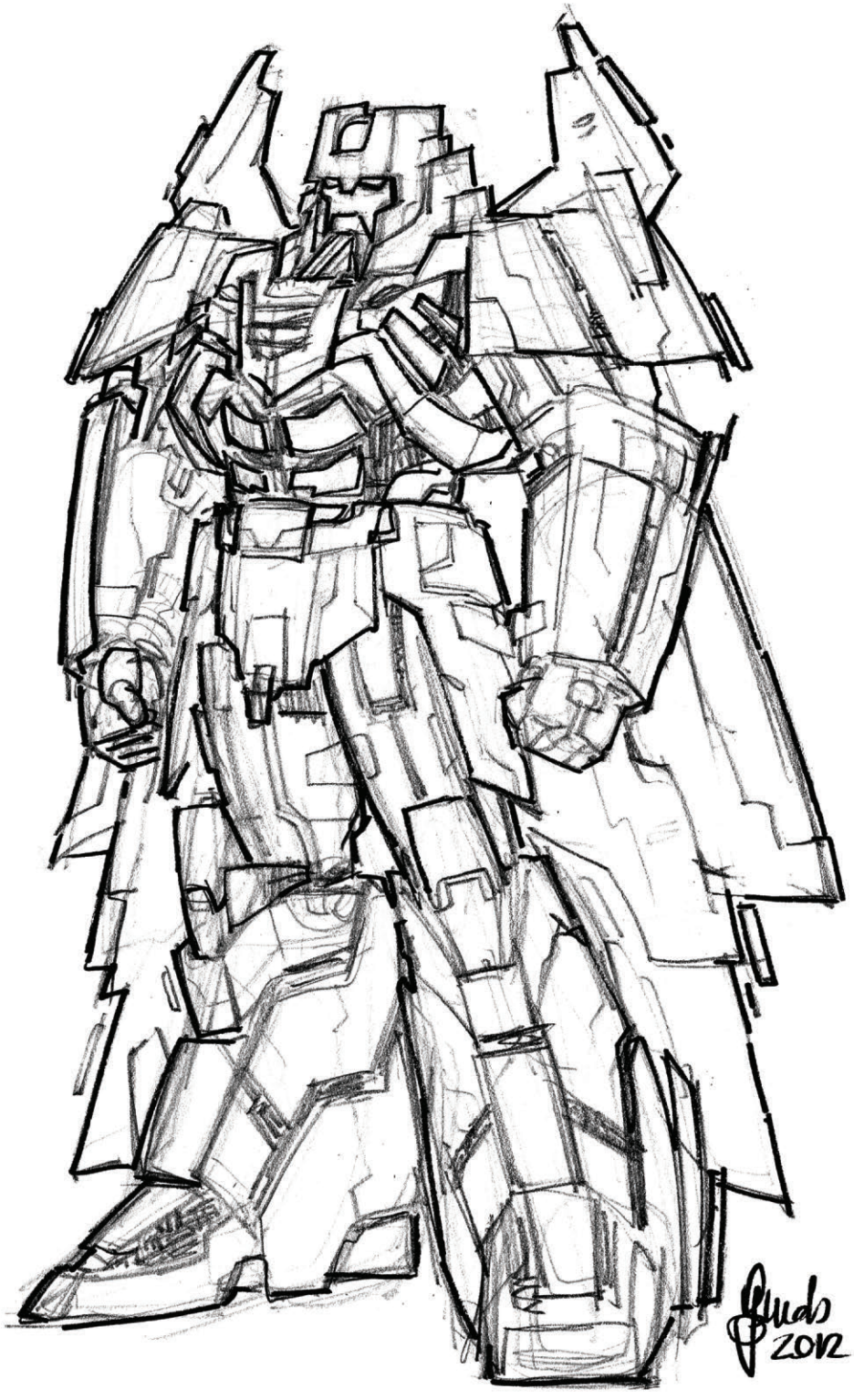

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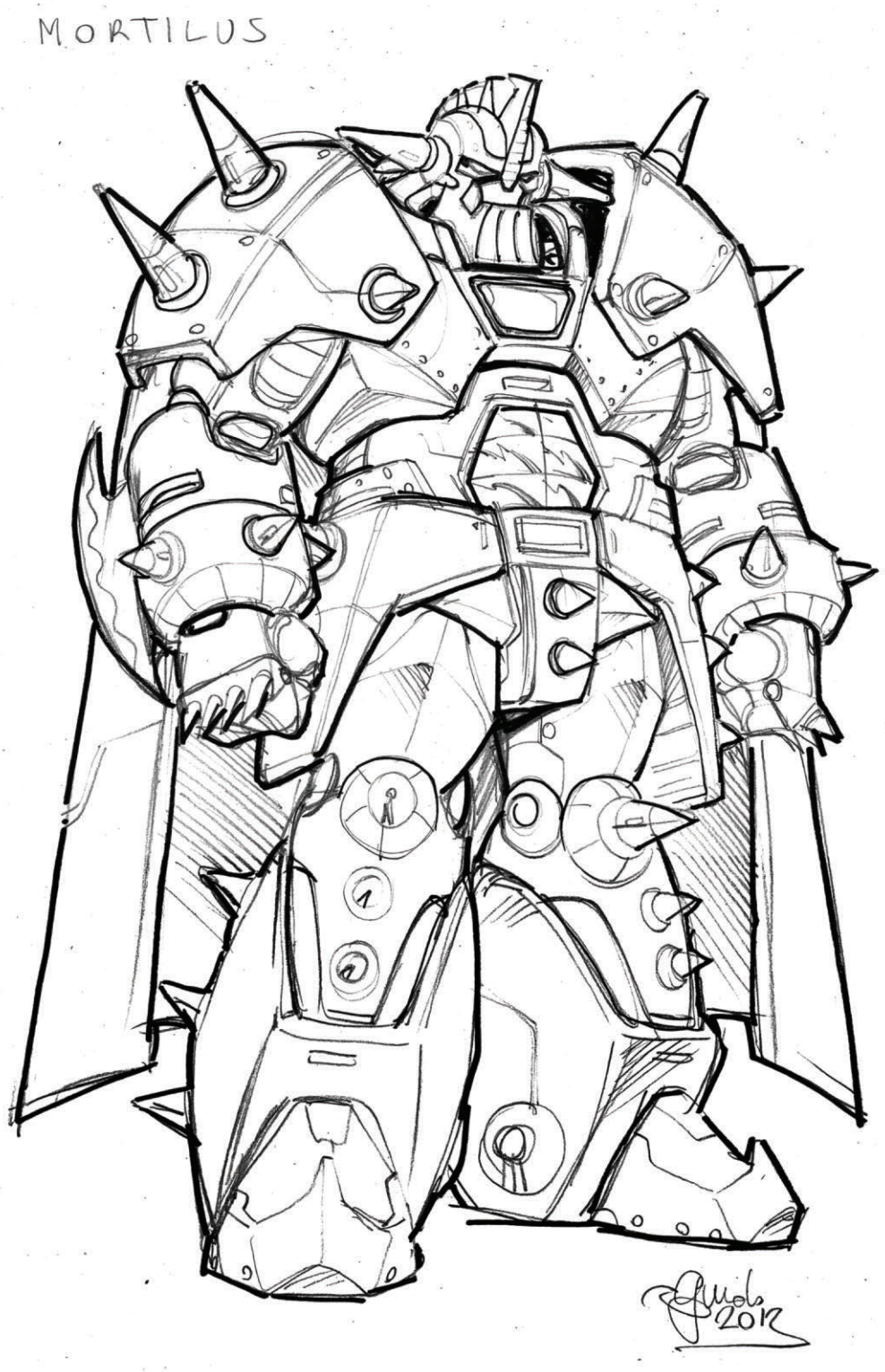

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More Than Meets The Eye continues as the crew of the *Lost Light* finally reaches Crystal City, home to the mysterious Circle of Light, and the origins of the Knights of Cybertron are revealed. In "Shadowplay," follow along as Rewind begins telling his crew mates a pre-war Cybertron story involving Orion Pax!

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